Original Story
FUMIAKI MARUTO

Art
TAKESHI MORIKI

Character Design
KUREHITO MISAKI

How to Raise a Boring Girlfriend 4

How to Raise a Boring Girlfriend

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How to Raise a Boring Girlfriend

4

Original Story
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How to Raise a Boring Girlfriend

Volume Four

Presented by
Fumiaki Maruto &
Takeshi Moriki

Character Design by
Kurehito Misaki

SIGN: AV ROOM

SO THERE'S BEEN NO PROGRESS ON ANYTHING BUT THE ART AND THE STORY!?

WHAT THE HELL!?

SAKA

IF YOU DON'T START PUTTING THE GAME TOGETHER SOON, YOU WON'T MAKE IT FOR WINTER COMIKET, YOU KNOW?

SAKA (SCRITCH)

HOW COME I'M WAY AHEAD OF EVERYONE WHEN I'M DOING ALL THE CHARACTER DESIGN, KEY ANIMATION, BACK-GROUNDS, AND PAINTING!?

IT'S SO WEIRD!

...NOT TO MENTION YOUR DAILY DRIVE.

JUST WHAT HAPPENED TO MAKE YOU SO HAPPY...?

IT IS INDEED... THE WAY YOUR MOTIVATION HAS INCREASED...

...BOTH THE SPEED AND THE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK...

WH-WH-WHO ARE YOU TO TALK!? YOU GOT ALL FIRED UP OUT OF NOWHERE RIGHT BEFORE SUMMER VACATION, AND YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON THE STORY AT TOP SPEED!

WELL, I AM A PROFESSIONAL IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING. IT'S ONLY NATURAL I SHOULD TAKE THIS ON WITH ALL I'VE GOT.

YOU KNOW, I TALKED TO YOUR EDITOR.

SHE SAID THE LAUNCH OF UTAKO KASUMI'S NEW SERIES KEEPS FALLING FURTHER AND FURTHER BEHIND.

YOU INTRODUCED SAWAMURA-SAN TO FUSHIKAWA BOOKS?

I HAD TO! MACHI-DA-SAN BEGGED ME!

AND I'LL SET ASIDE HOW PATHETIC YOU ARE, UTAHA KASUMI-GAOKA, FOR NOT ADMITTING I WON THAT ARGUMENT HANDS-DOWN.

WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT THE CODING AND BACK-GROUND MUSIC? *ESPE-CIALLY THE COD-ING!*

WELL, FOR NOW, I'LL IGNORE YOUR CHILDISH ATTEMPT TO PROVOKE ME, SAWAMURA-SAN.

BUT TO BE SURE, WE DO NEED TO THINK UP A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.

HAVE YOU EVER CODED BEFORE?

YOU'RE ASKING A CONSUMER OTAKU? SERIOUSLY?

blessing software

OUR CIRCLE'S NAME IS "BLESSING SOFT-WARE."

IT'S BEEN SEVERAL DAYS SINCE THE NIGHT OF THAT OPERATION WHEN I ENLISTED THE HELP OF UTAHA-SENPAI, KATOU, AND ALL THOSE OTHER PEOPLE.

AND AS YOU CAN SEE, ERIRI IS BACK INTO IT IN FULL FORCE, AND WE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO SUBMIT OUR APPLICATION FOR WINTER COMIKET IN TIME.

AND YOU CONTROL THAT STUFF BY CLICKING THE MOUSE BUTTONS AND SUCH.

THEY ALSO CALL THEM ADVENTURE GAMES.

ULTRA-ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC ENLIVENS THE SCENE.

INTERESTING DIALOGUE AND MONOLOGUES ARE DISPLAYED AS TEXT WITH VOICE-OVERS.

A CUTE GIRL IS SHOWN ON-SCREEN.

THE GAME WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE IS COMMONLY CALLED A KAMI-SHIBAI DATING SIM.

...THAT IS TO SAY, THE SCRIPTING, THEN I CAN PRETTY MUCH MAKE THE GAME MYSELF.

THESE DAYS, IF YOU CAN JUST WRITE THE SIMPLE COMMANDS FOR A READY-MADE GAME ENGINE...

UH, AKI-KUN.

ONCE YOU HAVE THE ART AND TEXT, YOU JUST NEED TO PUT THEM TOGETHER AND WRITE THE PROGRAM NECESSARY TO EXECUTE YOUR GAME.

BUT EVEN THEN, THAT REQUIRES A CERTAIN DEGREE OF KNOW-HOW.

WELL, UMM, I HAD AN IDEA.

HUH?

SORRY, I DIDN'T HEAR YOU.

I CAN DO THE SCRIPT-ING.

THE SCRIPT-ING.

I SAID I CAN DO IT.

SHAAAAAA (FWSSSH)

SIGN: AKI

GAA (ROAR)

HUH?

YOU HAVE NO IDEA!

HOW HARD IT IS TO MAKE A GAAAME!

...CAN'T BE DONE BY SOMEONE WHO'S NOT SAVVY IN ART, WRITING, AND MUSIC!

THE SCRIPTING, THE DIRECTION...

KATOU!

YOU—!

CAN YOU, AKI-KUN?

BETTER THAN YOU, AT LEAST!

...I'LL HAVE TO DO THE CODING MYSELF!

...SINCE IT'S COME TO THIS...

WELL, I'VE WRITTEN AN ENGAGING STORY LINE, SO I DON'T THINK THERE WILL BE ANY NEED FOR OVERPRODUCTION.

THE USERS MIGHT SAY THEY WANT TO SEE MORE ACTUAL ART RATHER THAN CRAPPY SPECIAL EFFECTS.

YOU TWO SURE ARE CONFIDENT...

FINE! I ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE...!

I'LL MAKE THE BEST GAME EVER! YOU'LL SEE!

KI (SQUAWK)

...

KYU (SQUEAK)

PHEW~!

I BOUGHT SOME FREEWARE ENGINE MANUALS ON THE WAY HOME.

THEY'RE THICK ENOUGH TO KILL A PERSON...

BOOKS: NOVEL GAME—

NOW I'M A CREATOR TOO...

...ON THE SAME STAGE AS THE PEOPLE I'VE ADMIRED, PRAISED, AND WATCHED OVER FOR SO LONG...

THIS IS AWESOME! SO AWESOME! I'M MORE INSPIRED THAN EVEN I IMAGINED I COULD BE!

I CAN DO THIS!

GACHA (KACHAK)

I CAN DO THE SCRIPTING!

HUH?

OH, SO YOU'RE BACK...

...TOMO.

LONG TIME NO SEE~! SINCE NEW YEAR, HUH~!?

MI-MICHI-RU!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!?

UNLUCKY PERVERT EVENT!

YIIIKES! EEEEK~!

CHAPTER 17

AH! HA! HA! SORRY, SORRY!

NO ONE WAS HOME, SO I LET MYSELF IN.

I RANG YOUR MOM, AND SHE TOLD ME WHERE THE KEY WAS.

ANYWAY, IT'S NOTHING TO BE SO EMBARRASSED ABOUT.

LUCKY! PERVERT ROLE REVERSAL!

YOU SHOULD BE MORE EMBARRASSED!

THE PEEPER SHOULD FEEL SHAME TOO!

HER NAME IS MICHIRU HYOUDOU.

TOMOYA'S COUSIN OF THE SAME AGE

MICHIRU HYOUDOU

PEOPLE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE DEPTH OF PSGs SHOULD NOT SAY "BLEEP-BLOOP"...

ANYWAY, YOUR ROOM IS SO TOTALLY STILL OTAKU —! PLAYING YOUR BLEEP-BLOOP GAMES, HUH?

BLEEP-BOOP!

BLEEP-BOOP!

BLEEP-BOOP!

SHE'S THE SAME AGE AS ME AND A SECOND-YEAR AT AN ALL GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL IN A NEIGHBORING PREFECTURE.

MY MOM IS HER DAD'S YOUNGER SISTER, WHICH MAKES US COUSINS.

WELL, LISTEN TO THIS, TOMO.

SO, WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR?

... THEN, AS NOW ...

I DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER RELATIVES NEAR MY AGE, SO WE'VE BEEN CLOSE EVER SINCE WE WERE KIDS, BUT...

...AS YOU CAN SEE, SHE HAS ZERO PERCEPTION OR AWARENESS OF EVENT FLAG-RAISING INCIDENTS LIKE THIS. SHE'S COMPLETELY UNINHIBITED.

WAIT! I ALREADY DRANK HALF OF THA—

GOOD (GLUG)

GOOD

GOOD

OH! BUT FIRST, I'M THIRSTY, SO CAN I HAVE THIS?

DOWN THE HATCH!

WHAT'S AWFUL IS WHAT YOU'RE WEARING.

SO, ANYWAY! GET THIS, TOMO. MY DAD IS SOOO AWFUL!

KOOO (TUNK)

PHEW... THAT HIT THE SPOT.

AWWW! BUT OTHER THAN MY SCHOOL UNIFORM, THIS IS ALL I BROUGHT WITH ME~!

I'LL LEND YOU MY SWEATS.

PUT SOME-THING ON TOP! WAIT, PUT ON A BOTTOM TOO!

IT'S TOO MUCH LIKE AL-WAYS!

HM? WHAT ABOUT IT? THIS IS HOW I ALWAYS DRESS.

NOW IS THE WHOLE REASON I'M SAYING IT...

OUR BODIES HAVE DEVELOPED A LOT SINCE WAY BACK THEN.

I ALWAYS WORE STUFF LIKE THIS AT HOME IN NAGANO.

ANYWAY, WHY COM-PLAIN NOW?

...MAYBE SO, BUT THAT'S NO EXCUSE.

PUUUU (POUT)

NO WAY! TOO EMBAR-RASSING! PEOPLE ONLY WEAR THOSE IN GYM CLASS!

IN ANY CASE, PUT ON SOME PROPER CLOTHES! OR ELSE, GO HOME!

WELL, DON'T YOU SOUND LIKE THE SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRMAN, MISTER OTAKU!

IT'S 'COS I'M AN OTAKU THAT I CAN'T EASILY OVERLOOK A SITUATION LIKE THIS! CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT!?

THIS IS WHAT YOU GET FOR BEING REARED IN A GIRLS' SCHOOL!

AND I'M A COMMANDER, I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW!

SO, AS I WAS SAYING... REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU AT NEW YEAR'S?

THAT I'D JOINED A HIGH SCHOOL BAND?

ALL GIRLS?

YEAH, NOW YOU MENTION IT, I DO REMEMBER YOU SAYING SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

SO YOU'RE STILL DOING THAT?

HOW RUDE~! WHY WOULD I QUIT AS A FIRST-YEAR WHEN I ONLY JUST STARTED!?

WELL, YOU GET BORED QUICK.

WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT, AT THAT.

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN RECALL, YOU'VE JOINED LOTS OF CLUBS AND QUIT THEM ALL, RIGHT?

Yaud give those anime fans who change their wallys with each new cours a run for their money.

I'M TELLING YOU, THIS IS DIFFERENT!

I'M TOTALLY SERIOUS THIS TIME!

UH-HUH.

AT OUR SCHOOL FESTIVAL LAST WEEK, WE HAD A CONCERT, AND IT WAS SO EXCITING ...!

PEOPLE ARE ALREADY SAYING IT WAS LEGENDARY AND STUFF!

MM...

AND I GUESS SOMEONE FROM A MUSIC VENUE SAW OUR SET AND SCOUTED US! HE ASKED US TO PLAY A GIG AT HIS CLUB!

YOU PLAY GUITAR, RIGHT?

AND SING TOO.

...SHE'S A TOTAL STAR.

THAT REMINDS ME...SHE'S AMAZING AT EVERY-THING EXCEPT STUDYING ...

SO AMAZING THAT A SCHOOL FESTIVAL-LEVEL "LEGENDARY" PERFORMANCE IS RIGHT UP HER ALLEY, HUH?

IN VOLLEY-BALL, SHE TOOK A LOSER TEAM TO SECOND PLACE IN THE DISTRICT TOURNA-MENT.

IN BASKET-BALL, SHE CAME WITHIN INCHES OF NATION-ALS.

IN THEATER, SHE PLACED IN THE PRE-FECTURAL TOURNA-MENT.

AND I WAS THINKING, IF WE'RE GONNA FOCUS ON GOING ALL THE WAY, WE'RE GONNA NEED TO COVER OUR COSTS.

SO I TRIED ASKING MY DAD FOR SOME HELP...

...BUT THEN HE GOT PISSED OFF AND SAID, "I NEVER KNEW ABOUT ANY OF THIS BEFORE!"

OF COURSE HE DIDN'T KNOW! I'D JUST TOLD HIM!

YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD HIM WHEN YOU FIRST JOINED THE BAND!

WELL, AFTER THIS, THAT, AND THE OTHER, HERE WE ARE.

...YOU'VE SKIPPED OVER SOME BITS, BUT YOU'RE SAYING YOU'VE RUN AWAY FROM HOME AGAIN?

BINGO!

AUNT MASAMI'S THE ONLY ONE I COULD COUNT ON, BUT SHE LEFT FOR A NEW JOB IN JOHANNES-BURG THIS MONTH AND MOVED OUT OF HER CONDO ...

THAT'S WORRI-SOME... NOT YOUR SITUATION, I MEAN THE SAFETY OF AUNT MASAMI...

AND SO...

...I'LL BE CRASHING HERE FOR A WHILE, OKAY?

WHA~? WHY NOT?

I MEAN, STAYING IN A HOUSE WITH A BOY THE SAME AGE AS YOU?

UH, THAT CAN'T BE A GOOD IDEA.

.....

SEE, FOR OTAKU, COUSINS ARE COMPLEX BLOOD RELATIVES IN MANY WAYS...

KOSHO こしょ

GWAH! HEE! HEE! HEE!?

KOSHO こしょ

KOSHO こしょ

KOSHO (RUB) こしょ

WHAT A BOOMER-ANG...!

WELL, THE THING WITH COUSINS IS...

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT YOU HERE, TOMO.

WOULD! YOU! LISTEN! TO ME!? FOR REAL~!

DOTA (BAP)

WHOOOA! PLEASE STOP !!!T, MICCHAAAN!

TAKE THAAAT! HAD ENOUGH!? COOCHIE COOCHIE COO~!

BATA (WHAP)

BUT YOUR CLOTH-ING—

DOTA (WHUMP)

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING OVER THERE WHILE WE'RE TALKING!? YOU'RE S'POSED TO LOOK A PERSON IN THE EYE WHEN YOU TALK TO THEM, YOU~! YOU!

GATA

KON (BONK)

GATA (RATTLE)

CAN: —COLA

-:YAWN:-

"JUST UNTIL THINGS SETTLE DOWN," MY ASS! HOW CAN MY OWN PARENTS BE SO IRRESPON-SIBLE!?

IT'S 'COS MICHIRU'S BEING A PAIN IN THE NECK NIGHT AFTER NIGHT!

MON

MON (PRET)

YEAH, I AM A BIT...

YOU SEEM VERY SLEEPY, AKI-KUN.

Appended Plug-in

Menu

WHAT DO THESE REAMS OF LINES HAVE TO DO WITH OUR SEXY GAME ANYWAY ...?

I KNEW IT WAS COMING, BUT THIS IS REALLY STOKING THE FIRES OF MY HATRED FOR SCIENCE AND MATH...

THE SCRIPT CODE...

UGH!

KURA (DIZZY)

HOW PERFECTLY SHE GIVES UP HER PLACE TO SOMEONE ELSE WITHOUT ANY FUSS WHATSO-EVER.

SWITCHED SEATS

HUH?

OH!

MAN, I REALLY AM WIPED OUT.

NO, NOT SEXY, NOT SEXY. OUR GAME IS WHOLE-SOME.

YOU MUSTN'T OVERDO IT, RINRI-KUN.

KURA KURA

UTAHA-SENPAI ...

EVERYONE KNOWS HOW PASSIONATE YOU ARE ABOUT THIS.

BUT IF YOU MAKE YOURSELF UNWELL AND WE HAVE TO STOP WORKING, IT'LL ALL BE FOR NAUGHT.

YOU CAN'T, UTAHA-SENPAI ...

I TOLD 'EM, YOU'RE ONLY RE-SPONS BLE FOR THE STORY.

I CAN'T WATCH THIS ANY-MORE.

...LOOK, I'LL TAKE OVER FOR YOU AND DO THE REST OF THIS AT MY PLACE. YOU GO HOME NOW.

I DID A LITTLE BIT OF THIS BEFORE TO HELP OUT A FRIEND.

BESIDES, I'M TOTALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR NEW LIGHT NOVEL.

!

YOUR BEING LATE... IS ALL MY FAULT, ISN'T IT?

WELL ...

SO I HAVE TO REALLY GIVE THIS ALL I'VE GOT.

AT THIS RATE, I'LL RUIN YOUR CAREER AS A WRITER...

!

!

...AND I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO ATONE FOR THAT AS LONG AS I LIVE.

RI— TOMOYA-KUN? C-COULD YOU REPEAT WHAT YOU JUST SAID?

HOWAWAAA (MOVED) ～ちちは

OHHH... SORRY.

I'M SO SLEEPY, I PROBABLY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M SAYING. PLEASE IGNORE ME.

RECORD... WHERE'S THE RECORD BUTTON ON THIS THING!?

JUST SHUT UP AND LISTEN, WOULD YOU!?

QUIT ACTING LIKE SOME UNHAPPY, FAITHFUL WOMAN WHOSE ENTIRE LIFE WAS RUINED BY A MAN!

NEED AN ENERGY DRINK...

KIRI

KIRI (SQUIK)

AAH! I THOUGHT I'D RECORDED RINRI-KUN'S IRREFUTABLE TESTIMONY...

...BUT I GOT YOUR BACKGROUND ACCUSATION IN THERE TOO...

UMM... MAYBE "MEGURI SMILE #1" WOULD BE GOOD FOR THE WAIST-UP SHOT.

HM...

I THINK MEGURI'S EMOTIONS ARE A BIT DIFFERENT IN THIS SCENE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THIS IS WHERE MEGURI CHEERS ON THE HERO AS HE'S ABOUT TO GO SEE ANOTHER HEROINE, RIGHT?

SO IT'S WEIRD FOR HER TO BE SMILING FROM EAR TO EAR, ISN'T IT?

SO I THINK "MEGURI SMILE #3" WOULD BE BETTER HERE.

YEAH. GUESS THAT MAKES SENSE.

COPY/ PASTE AND INSERT "MEGURI SMILE #3"... THERE.

MU (BUZZ)

MU

KATA (KTAK)

KATA

KATA

?

SHALL WE DO THAT, THEN, TOMOYA ?

SURE .....

!

From: Michiru

Sub: What time will u be home today?

I'm back already.
How about pizza for dinner?

IF THESE GUYS GOT A LOAD OF THAT...

YIKES!

AH.

BUT DON'T WORRY. I WON'T TELL ANYONE.

WELL... YEAH.

OH... UH... ALL OF IT ...?

SORRY. I SAW IT BY ACCIDENT.

I SEE! WE'RE ALL QUITE INTERESTED, KATOU-SAN!

YOU ABSO-LUTELY MUST FILL US IN ON THE DETAILS!

HA (GASP)

D—

DECEM-BER 18!?

...WHY IS THAT DATE FAMIL-IAR?

?

SHE FOUGHT WITH HER FAMILY AND RAN AWAY FROM HOME?

HER NAME IS MICHIRU HYOUDOU ...

...AND HER BIRTH-DAY IS DECEM-BER 18...

SHE'S BEEN LIVING WITH RINRI-KUN FOR MORE THAN A WEEK...

IT'S THE SAME DAY AS MY BIRTHDAY, GEEZ!

OH. THAT'S RIGHT, I THINK MAYBE YOU DID TELL ME THAT ONCE BEFORE. SORRY, AKI-KUN.

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

KATOH, PLEASE... TRY TO GET A SENSE OF THE GRAVITY HERE, OKAY ...?

BISHI! (WHAP)

BY THE WAY, MY BIRTHDAY WAS LAST MONTH.

I'M SORRY! PLEASE FORGIVE ME! I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU NEXT TIME!

THERE'S AN OBSTETRICIAN NEAR THE FAMILY HOME BACK IN NAGANO.

EVERYONE IN OUR FAMILY'S BORN THERE.

SO YOU MEAN YOU'VE BEEN CHILD-HOOD FRIENDS FROM BIRTH?

AND YOU'RE RELATED BY BLOOD ...?

YEAH ...

AAAAA-AAAAAH~!

THE DEPTH OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP MUST BE WORLDS APART FROM YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR SHAM CHILDHOOD FRIENDS, RIGHT?

SHE'S TRULY THE ORIGINAL CHILDHOOD FRIEND.

THEN SHE RULES THE ROOST WHEN IT COMES TO CHILDHOOD FRIENDS, RINRI-KUN.

ERIRI ...?

I CAN USE THIS! I CAN USE THIIIS!

.....HEH HEH ...!

YJRAA (SWOON)

SH... SH... SHAM...!

AND BY BEING BORN INTO THIS WORLD SIMULTANEOUSLY, THEY SHARE THEIR SENSES!

THE BONDS OF BLOOD, TIME, AND PLACE, AND THE STILL-GRANDER BONDS OF LOVE, SERVE TO INTENSIFY THE CONFLICTING SENSE OF DEPRAVITY ...

THE SIBLINGS, SEPARATED SOON AFTER BIRTH, ARE REUNITED!

THEIR BLOOD TIES UNKNOWN TO THEM, THEY FALL IN LOVE! IT'S A FORBIDDEN TALE THAT SPANS TWO GENERATIONS!

AS A RESULT OF THE FORBIDDEN LOVE BETWEEN RINRI-KUN'S MOTHER AND HYOUDOU-SAN'S FATHER, FRATERNAL TWINS ARE BORN!

I CAN USE THIS IN THE LITTLE SISTER PLOTLINE IN THE PAST ARC!

I CAN SEE IT NOW ...!

I CAN SEE THE ROUTE TO THE TRANSCENDENT BAD ENDING THAT ECLIPSES THE SUPER-HAPPY ENDING!

AH! AH HA! AH HA HA HA HA HA!

S-SAVE ME, KATOU ...

YOU... YOU'VE GOT TO STOP HER!

UM, AKI-KUN.

Y-YES?

I THOUGHT A COUSIN YOUR AGE...

...RAISED THE ABSOLUTE ULTIMATE LOVER FLAG. DID I GET THAT WRONG?

SHE ACTUALLY REMEMBERS WHAT I TOLD HER THAT TIME...!

GATA

GATA

GATA (RATTLE)

KON (TONK)

KATOOO-OOOOOU~!

GACHA (KACHAK)

I'VE BEEN A WRECK EVER SINCE MICHIRU SHOWED UP...

I'M RUNNING ON FUMES HERE. AND HAVING GROUND-LESS ASPER-SIONS CAST ON ME HAS WORN ME OUT...

URGH~! I'M BEAT...

zzz...

zzz...

!!!

...IN LOTS OF WAYS...

I'LL BE SAPPED AT THIS RATE...

END

MY CIRCLE MET UP TODAY.

→YAWN←

YOU'RE HOME REAL LATE, TOMO.

ANYWAY, HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO SLEEP IN MY BED ...?

DON'T YOU HAVE A FUTON SET UP IN THE GUEST ROOM?

EEP! THAT WAS CLOSE ~!

NAH! IT'S FINE! I'M SURE THOSE SHEETS GOT WASHED PLENTY OF TIMES AFTER UTAHA-SENPAI USED THEM!

OH! THAT REMINDS ME! I FOUND SOME VERY LONG HAIRS IN THIS BED!

...QUIT WITH THE BS!

MM. CAN'T SAY I AGREE ~!

WHAT PART?

AS IF I COULD PULL OFF A THING LIKE THAT!

TCH~! NOT FALLING FOR IT, HUH~?

THE REASON YOU'RE NOT POPULAR ISN'T THAT YOU DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES, TOMO.

IT'S 'COS YOU'RE AN OTAKU.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? BEING POPULAR OR NOT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH BEING AN OTAKU.

THAT'S NOT TRUE! IF YOU ACTED NORMAL, YOU'D DEFINITELY BE POPULAR.

AS ALWAYS, SHE'S SO BLINDLY SUPPORTIVE OF HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY...

IT'S TIMES LIKE THIS I REALLY FEEL WE'RE RELATED.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THAT CONF DENCE OF YOURS S COMING FROM, BUT SHALL I PROVE YOU WRONG?

HUH~? HOW?

YOU'RE A NON-OTAKU, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE A BOY-FRIEND, DO YOU?

H-HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT!?

FROM THE FACT THAT YOU'RE CRASHING AT THE HOUSE OF A BOY THE SAME AGE AS YOU!

THIS AND THAT ARE TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT TOPICS!

SEE, THE THING IS...

...I'M OBSESSED WITH THE BAND RIGHT NOW, AND IT'S LIKE, "ROMANCE? WHATEVER!"

SAME GOES FOR ME.

I'M OBSESSED WITH OTAKU STUFF AND HAVE NO INTEREST IN REAL WORLD 3-D WOMEN RIGHT NOW...

AWWW! WHAT A WASTE! EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE IN THE SPRING OF YOUR YOUTH?

I CAN INTRODUCE YOU TO THE MEMBERS OF MY BAND IF YOU WANT?

WELL, THAT'S IF YOU GIVE UP BEING AN OTAKU THOUGH.

WHY WOULD YOU EVEN INTRODUCE A GUY TO A BUNCH OF GIRLS WHO ARE SO OBSESSED WITH THEIR BAND THEY DON'T NEED A MAN IN THE FIRST PLACE!? HOW CONTRADICTORY CAN YOU GET!?

TIMES I FEEL RELATED TO HER #2—

WHEN SHE EXPRESSES NARROW VIEWS THAT MAKE ME THINK "A NON-OTAKU JUST WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND!"

AAH!

...AND THEN WAS SHOCKED TO DISCOVER SHE'D TRIED TO THROW OUT ALL MY OTAKU STUFF.

I THOUGHT MY ROOM SEEMED ODDLY CLEAN BEFORE...

GOOD! DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ANY-THING'S DIFFER-ENT...

PHEEEE

GARA (RATTLE)

ALL RIGHT! HOW ABOUT A TUNE TO TRY TO STAY AWAKE!? ♪

...BUT THEN SHE'S GOT A GUITAR AND AMP IN HERE...

I FIGURED SHE WAS TRYING TO BE THOUGHT-FUL AND TAKE ON SOME HOUSE-HOLD CHORES...

...DON'T PLUG INTO THE AMP, OKAY? I'VE GOT MY OWN WORK TO DO.

GOSSSH! I KNOW ALREADY! I'M USING HEAD-PHONES!

WITH AN ELECTRIC GUITAR, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THE SOUND'S REALLY LIKE WITHOUT AN AMP OR HEADPHONES.

IT'S JUST STRUMMING.

♪

JAN

JAN (CHANG)

BUT... THERE'S SOMETHING COMFORTABLE ABOUT MICHIRU'S TONE.

UTO (NOD)

UTO

HUH!? HEY, WHAT THE HECK IS THAT!?

WHOA!

COULD THAT BE... ME?

YEAH. WELL... IT WAS DRAWN WITHOUT SEEING THE MODEL.

WHY DID YOU DRAW THIS?

I SCANNED IT.

OTAKU HAVE THE ABILITY TO DRAW SOMETHING LIKE THIS BASED ON THEIR IMAGINATION ALONE, YOU KNOW?

IT'S AMAZING, ISN'T IT?

HER TALENT REALLY IS FRIGHTENING...

WHEN I WAS TALKING ABOUT MICHIRU, ERIRI DREW THIS JUST BASED ON WHAT SHE HEARD ME SAY.

SHA... SHA...

IT WASN'T ME.

YOU MAKE FUN OF OTAKU...

...BUT THEIR ARTISTIC SENSE HOLDS ITS OWN AGAINST THAT OF THE ARTISTS YOU GUYS LIKE ...

TOMO, WHAT ARE YOU USING THIS FOR?

I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT, BUT IS IT PART OF YOUR EVENING WANK BANK ...?

HUH?
DID YOU NOT HEAR THE ELOQUENT POINT I JUST MADE? YOU'RE ONLY CREEPED OUT?
YOU'VE GOT THE REAL THING RIGHT HERE, BUT INSTEAD, YOU MAKE A PICTURE AND USE THAT? YOU'RE WAY TOO OBSESSED WITH 2-D.
HUH!?
I'M NOT USING IT TO JERK OFF, YOU IDIOT! DO YOU SERIOUSLY THINK I'D WHACK IT TO ANYTHING, EVEN A MINOR, AS LONG AS IT'S 2-D?
THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE ANGRY ABOUT?
ISN'T IT TIME YOU GREW OUT OF THIS KINDA STUFF?
HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU, BUT I HAVE A DREAM.
AND UNTIL IT'S REALIZED, THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO STOP BEING AN OTAKU.
OOH~! WHAT IS IT?
THANK YOU FOR ASKING. MY DREAM IS...
...TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE DATING SIM!
HUH ...?

.....

WHY AM I GETTING LECTURED TO BY A RUNAWAY?
DOESN'T YOUR MOM EVER SAY ANYTHING ABOUT IT? YOU'VE ONLY GOT A YEAR TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO AFTER SCHOOL.
WH-WH-WH-WH-WHAT ARE YOU— MY MOTHER!?
YOU CAN'T LIVE YOUR LIFE OFF OF YOUR HOBBIES.
EITHER WAY, YOU HAVE NO INTENTION OF EVER GETTING A JOB, DO YOU? THINK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE!

GAGAN (SHOCK)
THAT'S NOT TRUE!
I'VE HEARD THAT THE DATING SIM INDUSTRY'S GOT NO FUTURE THOUGH.

BUKU 31"

I CAN'T TAKE IT MUCH MORE...

BUKU 31"

BUKU (BLUB) 31"

PHWOOO!

NOW WHAT ...? THAT BOSSY ATTITUDE OF HERS ...

AH...

GACHA (KACHAK)

...BUT EVEN SO, I NEED TO HOLD ON TO MY DREAM!

MI-CHIRU MIGHT HATE ME FOR SELLING HER OUT...

ZABA (SPLISH)

...I KNOW!

I'LL SECRETLY PAY A VISIT TO UNCLE HYOUDOU.

DAN (STOMP)

DOTA

DOTA (THUD)

I TOLD HER NOT TO PLAY OUT OF HER AMP ...!

WHAT THE —?

THIS VISION ...

GACHA (KACHAK)

!

T-TOMO ...?

O-OH! ERR, UH, SEE, I WAS JUST...

SOME-TIMES I JUST NEED TO HEAR IT THROUGH THE AMP, YOU KNOW?

MICHI-RU.

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO MAKING THE ULTIMATE DATING SIM WITH ME?

.....HUH?

CHAPTER
18

AND SO...

...THIS IS OUR LEAD SCRIPT-WRITER, UTAHA KASUMI-GAOKA-SENPAI.

AND NEXT TO HER IS OUR ART DIRECTOR, ERIRI SAWA-MURA.

AND HERE, WE HAVE OUR MUSIC SUPERVISOR, MICHIRU HYOUDOU.

.....

OUT WITH IT, TOMO. WHAT THE HELL IS THIS ABOUT?

GISU (TENSE)

GISU

I BELIEVE I SHOULD BE ASKING THAT, RINRI-KUN?

GISU

I MOST CERTAINLY GOT THAT PART, BUT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT, LET ALONE AGREE TO IT, NOW DID I?

AND YOU'RE JUST GONNA MESS YOURSELF UP BY RUNNING YOUR MOUTH ABOUT "NEWLY CHOSEN" OR "HEAD OF MUSIC" OR WHATEVER IN THE FIRST PLACE, TOMO.

I TOLD YOU I'D BE INTRODUCING MY NEWLY CHOSEN HEAD OF MUSIC IN TODAY'S PROGRESS MEETING.

WELL, I DID GIVE YOU A HEADS-UP, DIDN'T I?

GISU

T.....
"TOMO"
...?

WHAT A NATURAL NICKNAME. SOUNDS LIKE SHE'S BEEN USING IT SINCE THEY WERE KIDS. IT DOESN'T FEEL AT ALL SUPERFICIAL AND FORCED AND TACKED ON LIKE "RINRI-KUN"...

MICHI-RU?

BY THE WAY, TOMO, I'M SORRY TO SAY THIS EVEN THOUGH YOU WENT TO THE TROUBLE OF BUYING THEM FOR ME...

...BUT THESE CLOTHES REALLY ARE TOO TIGHT. DO YOU MIND IF I CHANGE OUT OF THEM?

Y-YOU EVEN BOUGHT CLOTHES FOR HER ...? CAN'T GET ANY MORE "PART OF THE FAMILY" THAN THAT!

SHE'S WORLDS APART FROM A LOSER OLDER WOMAN WHO ALWAYS KEEPS GIVING FOR NOTHING IN RETURN!

I KNOW YOU'RE TRYING TO ESCAPE YOUR OWN SENSE OF DEFEAT, BUT MAYBE YOU'RE KIND OF OVER-DOING IT?

...

WHAT'S SHE TALKING ABOUT, RINRI-KUN?

ガチャ
GACHA (KACHAK)

CRAP, IT... FEELS LIKE THE GROUP'S GONNA SPLIT UP RIGHT HERE...

AH, I SEE!

SO THIS IS AKI-KUN'S COUSIN?

OH!

WOW! AKI-KUN TOLD ME BEFORE, BUT YOU'RE REALLY TALL!

RIGHT. YES. THIS IS MICHIRU HYOUDOU. BE NICE TO HER.

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING ~!

I'VE GOT SOME DRINKS AND SWEETS!

NOT TO MENTION STYLISH!

O-OH, STOP... DO YOU REALLY THINK SO?

HEE HEE!

WOW... THANK HEAVENS FOR KATOU'S ORDINARI-NESS...

HEY, HANG ON! KATOU'S GOTTEN TO THE POINT WHERE SHE USES MY HOUSE LIKE IT'S HERS!

OH.

AND THIS IS OUR CIRCLE'S... UMM...

I'M MEGUMI KATOU.

IT'S A PLEASURE, HYOUDOU-SAN.

AHA ~!

SO YOU'RE TOMO'S GIRLFRIEND, THEN?

NICE TO MEETCHA ~!

...WHAT DID YOU TELL HER, TOMOYA!?

... RINRI-KUN.

HUH? WHUH?

I JUST TOLD HER THAT KATOU WAS OUR CIRCLE'S "HEROINE"!

HUH?

...AKI-KUN, THERE'S AN INCONSISTENT CONVERSATION STUCK IN HERE.

HM? IS IT A BUG?

JUST WRITE DOWN THE DETAILS ON THE DEBUG SHEET FOR NOW.

KACHI (CLICK)

KACHI

...THIS BIG, THICK BOOK? ALL OF IT?

I MASTERED THE NECESSARY BITS, AND I DIDN'T TOUCH THE SECOND VOLUME AT ALL.

WELL, I JUST SKIMMED MOST OF THE REALLY BASIC FUNCTIONS IN THE FIRST VOLUME OF THE TEXTBOOKS.

STILL, IT'S RUNNING BETTER THAN EXPECTED.

YOU'RE AMAZING, AKI-KUN.

BOOK: GIRIGIRI / NOVEL GAMES

GISU

GISU

GISU

AT LEAST WE'RE NOT SKIPPING SCHOOL, RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME, AND CAUSING TROUBLE FOR OUR PARENTS LIKE YOU.

WE DO ALL THE THINGS WE'RE SUPPOSED TO, AND WE ALSO INVEST TIME IN OUR HOBBIES.

...HOW COME YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY ALL THESE OTAKU WOMEN, OF ALL PEOPLE, TOMO?

GISU (TENSE)

GISU

GISU

Y-YOU CAN CUT THE AIR IN HERE WITH A KNIFE!

IT WAS NONE OTHER THAN RINRI-KUN WHO GOT US INVOLVED ...

YOU SEEM TO BE UNDER A GRAVE MISAPPRE-HENSION, SO ALLOW ME TO CORRECT IT.

WHY WOULD YOU DRAG TOMO INTO THIS!?

WHAT'S THE POINT OF YOU BEING IN A PUNY CIRCLE LIKE THIS ONE!?

FIRST OFF, YOU TWO ARE BIG SELL-ERS, AREN'T YOU?

WH— WH—

WHAH ...?

WELL, YOU'RE PLENTY IMMATURE YOURSELF, UTAHA-SENPAI ...

TO BEGIN WITH, ALL I SEE IS THAT YOU HAPPENED TO RUN AWAY TO THE HOUSE OF A MALE RELATIVE, WHO HAPPENS TO HAVE BEEN RAISED IN A WAY THAT'S INCOMPATIBLE WITH YOU, AND YOU HAPPEN TO HATE THAT AND CRY ABOUT IT. YOU'RE SUCH A CHILD.

YOU'RE SO UNINFORMED, COUSIN-SAN, LIKE A LIVING EXAMPLE OF THE EXPRESSION, "BETTER A NEIGHBOR WHO IS NEAR THAN A BROTHER FAR OFF."

WHA —!?

HANG ON, RINRI-KUN. WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

ALSO, WHEN IT COMES TO UTAHA-SENPAI, SHE'S STILL GOING WAY EASY ON YOU.

IT'S YOUR FAULT FOR LOOKING FOR A FIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

HEY, TOMO ~!

THIS PERSON IS BULLYING ME!

HUH? UH...

ON HIS RELATIVE'S SIDE OF COUR— HEY!

GAH ~!

AWW! "HALF," YOU SAY, BUT YOU'RE TAKING THE WHOLE CHEST-NUT!

IMBA (CHOP)

I WAS PLANNING TO EAT BOTH OF 'EM~! LEMME HAVE HALF~!

OF COURSE! THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING FOR EACH OF US! YOU GOT THE STRAW-BERRY SHORT-CAKE!

NO WAYYY~! I WAS GONNA HAVE THAT MONT BLANC! YOU'RE GONNA EAT THAT WHOLE THING YOUR-SELF!?

KUNZUHOGURETSU (GRAPPLE)

OKAY, OKAY! LOOK, I'LL GIVE YOU HALF THE STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE!

SAY, "AHH!"

BUT THE STRAW-BERRY'S ALREADY GONE! IT'S JUST CAKE—

HN?
RUMBLE

HEH! HEH ~!
IT'S MII-INE!
...HGUAOOO

BUT I HAVE PERMISSION FROM UNCLE AND AUNTIE TO BE HERE NOW, SO IT'S KINDA MY HOUSE TOO.
INDEED. THIS IS RINRI-KUN'S HOUSE... IT'S NOT YOUR HOUSE.
TON
TON (TOK)
TON

"WHERE" ...? ISN'T THIS TOMO'S HOUSE?

DO YOU TWO... HAVE ANY CONCEPT OF WHERE YOU ARE?

IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE QUESTION IS WHETHER IT'S NECESSARY TO EMPLOY SUCH EXCESSIVE CLOSE PHYSICAL CONTACT EVERY TIME. YOU COULD HAVE JUST ASKED FOR HALF AND GOTTEN IT LIKE A NORMAL PERSON.

TON

TON

TON

IT'S FINE! WE'RE COUSINS! AT GRANDMA'S HOUSE, THE RULE IS THAT, WHEN THE TREATS COME OUT, WHOEVER CAN KNOCK DOWN AND PIN THEIR OPPONENT FOR THREE SECONDS GETS TO TAKE ALL, RIGHT ~?

WELL, THAT KIND OF STUFF WAS ONLY UP UNTIL ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL, WASN'T IT?

RIGHT, RIGHT! EVER SINCE THEN, YOU'VE BEEN ALL WEIRDLY SHY, TOMO!

WE STARTED TAKING SEPARATE BATHS FROM AROUND THE SECOND YEAR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TOO.

MICHIRU, NOT THAT —!

TON

TON

TON

TON

TON

...I SEE. IT SEEMS MY COMPLAINT ABOUT THE PHYSICAL CONTACT WAS THOUGHTLESS. I APOLOGIZE, ANTI-CHILD PORN-KUN.

GATA (RATTLE)

GATA

GATA

AH. AH-HA. AH-HA-HA.....

WHY? WHO? WHAT? THE VIBRATIONS ARE SHAKING ERIRI...

MICHIRU, PLEASE! I JUST NEED YOU TO MAKE A COUPLE SONGS FOR US!

AND ALSO, PROGRAM THEM IN AND DO THE BACKGROUND MUSIC...AND WHILE I'VE GOT YOU ANYWAY, COMPOSE THE MAIN THEME SONG, AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, WORK ON THE BAND TIE-IN STUFF, AND... OW! OW! OW!

(SQUEEZE)

I! TOLD! YOU! I'VE GOT NO INTEREST IN ANY OTAKU STUFF!

COME TO THINK OF IT, RINRI-KUN, YOU ASK EVERYBODY FOR THINGS IN THE SAME EXTREMELY INSOLENT WAY.

IRA (IRK)

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN GOOD AT EVERY-THING! YOU'D TRY SOMETHING FOR A SECOND AND THEN LEAVE ME IN THE DUST IN NO TIME!

BASKET-BALL, VOLLEY-BALL... WHAT-EVER YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO, I CAN'T BEAT YOU AT IT...YOU SHINE AT EVERY-THING...

THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE LIKE!

AND THAT'S WHY YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN!

MY HERO!

PACHIKURI (BLINK)

TOMO .....

...WHY DOES HE ALWAYS, ALWAYS MAKE PASSES AT OTHER GIRLS RIGHT IN FRONT OF OUR EYES, I WONDER.

...I'M LEAVING.

WAIT A MINUTE! JUST LISTEN TO MICHIRU PLAY GUITAR ONCE!

YOU'LL BE TOTALLY INSPIRED!

YEAH... THAT FEELING... IT WAS NOSTALGIA...

WELL...IT'S AWESOME! JUST TRUST ME! OR MAYBE I SHOULD SAY IT'S NOSTALGIC!

BUT YOU YOURSELF ONLY HEARD HER PLAY ONCE, RIGHT, RINRI-KUN?

JUST WHY IS IT YOU'RE SO TRANSFIXED BY THIS GIRL'S MUSIC?

THAT'S WHAT IT WAS LIKE.

IT HAD THAT WHIFF OF AN ERA THAT WAS A LITTLE BIT BUBBLY AND A LITTLE BIT SENTIMENTAL.

...FOR A TIME WHEN DATING SIMS COULD EASILY SELL 100,000 UNITS AND WERE MAJOR SOURCE MATERIAL FOR ANIME.

THERE'S NOTHING MORE TO DISCUSS, TOMOYA.

I'M TELLING YOU, JUST WAIT A BIT!

...

THERE'S NO WAY ANY OTAKU COULD UNDER-STAND MY MUSIC!

END OF MEETING. OVER AND OUT.

THAT'S 'COS YOU'VE GOT NON-OTAKU BLOOD LYING DORMANT IN YOU, TOMO!

THAT'S NOT TRUE, MICHIRU! I WAS TOTALLY MOVED BY YOUR SONG!

AND UTAHA-SENPAI IS AN ACCOMPLISHED WOMAN OF LETTERS, WHO'S AT THE TOP OF HER GRADE EVERY YEAR! SHE'S MUCH CLOSER TO THE REAL WORLD THAN I AM!

WELL, IN THAT CASE, ERIRI'S THE ACE OF THE ART CLUB AND EXTREMELY LADYLIKE, SEE?

ISN'T IT OB-VIOUS!?

SO WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON, TOMO!?

I'M A BELIEVER IN EVERYONE HERE!

...

...

HUH ~?

B-BUT —!

BUT NOBODY WAS INTERESTED IN MAKING A GAME BEFORE THEY JOINED THIS CIRCLE IN THE FIRST PLACE, RIGHT?

YEAH, TOMOYA. FORCING SOMEONE INTO IT WHO'S NOT INTERESTED WILL JUST MAKE US ALL MISERABLE.

GIVE UP ALREADY, RINRI-KUN.

I MEAN, LOOK AT HOW MUCH WORK WE'VE DONE ON IT ALREADY.

OR WERE YOU TWO ONLY PRETENDING TO BE UN-INTERESTED?

HUH?

HEY, AKI-KUN. THIS CHARAC-TER'S FACE IS KINDA WEIRD HERE.

AND WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

WHOA! WHOA, KATOU-SAN.

DOTA

LET'S SEE, WHERE?

DOTA

DOTA

DOTA (STOMP)

EEP! WHAT'S WITH THIS CREEPY WAIST-UP ART!?

YIIIKES...

SEE? IT LOOKS KIND OF FLAT.

.....

UH, TOMOYA, I THINK YOU MESSED UP THE SIZING OF THE PARTS FOR THIS EXPRESSION.

YOU USED AN EXPRESSION FOR A FARAWAY CHARACTER AND STUCK IT ON A CLOSE-UP FACE, SEE?

O-OH...

TO BE SURE, WHEN YOU LOOK AT IT CLOSE, SOMETHING IS PASTED ON IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FACE.

IT'S TOO SURREAL. YOU CAN'T STAND TO LOOK STRAIGHT AT IT.

WHAT THE —?

SOMEHOW WE'RE BACK TO OUR USUAL CIRCLE ACTIVITY...

KATOU...

END

AWW, MAN! HOW ARE YOU GONNA MAKE UP FOR THIS!?

IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT HE'S SUCH AN OTAKU, ISN'T IT!?

YOU THINK? WHEN I MET HIM, HE WAS ALREADY A SPECTACULARLY OVERBEARING OTAKU, YOU KNOW?

AND, UMM, I CAN CONFIDENTLY SAY THAT I GOT DRAGGED INTO THIS AGAINST MY WILL, OKAY?

BUT HE WAS SO CUTE AND PURE WHEN HE WAS A KID...

OH! OH! IT WAS ME! THE VERY FIRST ONES WHO PULLED TOMOYA ONTO THE ROAD TO OTAKUDOM WERE ME, MY MOM, AND MY DAD!

...WHY DO YOU LOOK SO HAPPY ABOUT THAT, SAWAMURA-SAN?

KOKU (NOD)

KOKU

KOKU

YEAH, YEAH! THAT'S RIGHT! YOU'RE RIGHT! I REMEMBER HIM AT THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE CEREMONY AND STUFF EVEN NOW!

SAWA-MURA-SAN?

EXCUSE ME, SAWAMURA-SAN.

H-HUH... I WAS THE ONE FOLLOWING HIM AROUND IN MY CASE.

WHEREVER I WENT TO PLAY, HE'D COME TROTTING AFTER ME SAYING, "MICCHAN, WAIT UUUP ~!"

NOW IT'S TURNED INTO GIRL TALK AND REMINISCING ABOUT THE PAST!

YOU TWO, THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO BE SYMPATHIZING, IS IT NOW?

KOKU

KOKU (NOD)

OH... YEP ...!

I COULD COUNT ON HIM WHEN I WAS IN TROUBLE!

BUT HE WAS STILL A REAL BOY TOO...

KACHI

KACHI

KACHI

HER APATHY AT TIMES LIKE THESE IS LIKE THE SMILE OF A GODDESS.

CHIRA (GLANCE)

KACHI

KACHI (KTAK)

AND KATOU COULDN'T CARE LESS, HUH...?

THIS ONE SUMMER... TOMO WAS FOLLOWING BEHIND ME LIKE ALWAYS, AND I GOT KIND OF ANNOYED, SO I WENT OFF UP THIS MOUNTAIN BY MYSELF.

IN A STROKE OF BAD LUCK, I TWISTED MY ANKLE ON A CLIFF AND COULDN'T WALK ANYMORE.

YIKES! THAT MUST HAVE BEEN AWFUL!

YEAH, FOR REAL! AND IT GETS DARK ON MOUNTAINS SO FAST, YOU KNOW? SO THERE I WAS, IN THIS GLOOMY FOREST, WITH CROWS CAWING OVERHEAD. IT WAS SUPER-CREEPY.

AND I WAS SO AFRAID OF THE BATS FLYING ALL OVER THE PLACE!

WHOA ...!

PARA (FLIP)

I COULDN'T EVEN CRY, NEVER MIND CRYING OUT FOR HELP. ALL I COULD DO WAS SHIVER...

YIPES!

AND THEN, THE BUSHES IN FRONT OF ME STARTED RUSTLING!

S-SO WAS IT A BEAR OR A WILD BOAR ...!?

O-ON HIS BACK —!

THEN TOMO LIFTED ME ONTO HIS BACK, AND WE WENT BACK DOWN THE MOUNTAIN...

HIS ARMS AND LEGS WERE COVERED IN SCRAPES... HE SAID HE'D BEEN LOOKING FOR ME LIKE CRAZY ALL OVER THE PLACE...!

IT WAS TOMO!

OH ......

I CAN'T HEAR YOU! I CAN'T HEAR YOU! I CANNOT HEAR YOU!

HOW OLD WERE YOU!? WHO DID IT HAPPEN TO FIRST, TOMOYA!?

TOMO, WHY, YOU —!?

GAH~! THINKING ABOUT IT NOW STILL PISSES ME OFF ~!

I MEAN, THAT WAS THE FIRST AND LAST TIME I LET HIM SEE ME CRY!

H-HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN THIS HAP-PENED ...?

I BAWLED ALL THE WAY BACK TO OUR GRANDPA'S HOUSE.

HE WAS SHORTER THAN ME BACK THEN, BUT HE NEVER ONCE GRUMBLED ABOUT IT...

IT WAS ME WHO CRIED.

?

HUH?

I TRIED TO UNINSTALL THE PROGRAM, AND THE SCREEN JUST WENT BLUE.

THE PC JUST FROZE.

CHAPTER 19

HMM~! IT REALLY IS GONE ...

I JUST SAW IT LAST WEEK, BUT NOW IT'S HARD TO DIG OUT...

THIS PLACE IS KIND OF A MESS...

HMM... NEED SOME HELP?

DON'T BOTHER. YOU JUST HAD A BATH. NO NEED TO GET DIRTY AG—

HEY!

LOOKING FOR SOME-THING.

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?

TOMO, THE BATH'S ALL YOURS ~!

GACHA! (KACHAK)

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

HMM~? I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING, AM I?

I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT YOUR ACTIONS HERE... I'M TALKING ABOUT YOUR DECISION TO CHOOSE THAT FOR SLEEP-WEAR!

AWW~! YEAH, BUT I PUT MY USUAL PJ'S IN THE WASH BEFORE!

THIS IS ALL I'VE GOT ~!

THEN PUT ON THE REST! DON'T HALF-ASS IT AND WEAR ONE PART!

NO WAY! I'D BE TOO HOT AFTER MY BATH!

I BOUGHT YOU A CHANGE OF CLOTHES. THEY'RE RIGHT THERE, SO PUT THOSE ON! I'LL LEAVE THE ROOM!

GOSH~! SORRY, TOMO! I'LL PAY YOU BACK SOON!

THANK GOOD-NESS I WAS PRE-PARED FOR THIS...!

THE CIRCLE'S SHORT ON FUNDS ...

BY ALL MEANS. IN CASH, PLEASE ...

HUH... SO SHE WALKS AROUND HALF-NAKED JUST 'COS SHE PREFERS LIGHT CLOTHES THAT ARE EASY TO MOVE IN.

PAN (PAFF)

PAN

THIS IS PRETTY GOOD! THANKS, TOMO!

OOH!

OHH ?

BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER. EVEN IF IT'S GONE, I'LL MAKE DO SOMEHOW. I CAN BUY IT AGAIN IF I HAVE TO.

NO...

SO DID YOU FIND WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?

GYUAAAA (RIFF)

IT'S A ONE-MAN AUDIENCE TOO.

GET READY FOR MICHIRU HYOUDOU'S ONE-WOMAN RECITAL~!

UNDER-STOOD!

REALLY? NOW YOU'RE TALKING, TOMO!

OH! I JUST REMEM-BERED. YOU CAN USE YOUR AMP TODAY.

BUT ONLY AT A LEVEL THAT DOESN'T BOTHER THE NEIGH-BORS.

MM. SHE REALLY IS GOOD...

WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES, I CAN PICTURE THE BACK-GROUNDS... AND THE CHARACTER ART...

I CAN EVEN SEE THE EMO-TIONAL LINES COMING UP IN THE DIALOG BOX.

I CAN SEE ALL KINDS OF CHAR-ACTERS LAUGHING, CRYING, FALLING IN LOVE, KISSING...

MICHIRU WILL ELEVATE THE FUN, JOY, SADNESS, AND HEART-BREAK OF THE STORY THROUGH HER SONGS...

HOWEVER, DUE TO RATINGS, THEY DON'T GO ANY FURTHER THAN THAT.

JAJAN (CHACHANG)

JAJAN

AND KATOU'S...

...WELL, YOU KNOW, MAYBE THEY'LL CONTRIBUTE A LITTLE TO ENHANCING HER POWER AS A HEROINE.

THEY'LL GET COZY WITH ERIRI'S GRAPHICS.

HER SONGS WILL DEFINITELY BE A FIT FOR UTAHA-SENPAI'S WRITING.

HM ~?

HEY, MICHIRU.

...

I REALLY DO WANT YOU.

SO YOU'D BE MY FIRST, TOMO? HMM...

IT'S NOT THAT I'M NOT INTERESTED, AND IF IT WAS WITH YOU, I DON'T THINK I'D HAVE SUCH TERRIBLE MEMORIES OF IT, SO I GUESS I COULD COMPROMISE AND GO WITH YOU.

WHOA! HANG ON! HANG ON! HANG ON THERE!

WHAT I WANT IS YOUR MUSIC!

AUGH! TOMO, YOU'RE THE WORST! YOU CAN'T BLAME ME FOR MIS-UNDER-STANDING!

S-SORRY ...!

SO... YOU REALLY WON'T DO IT, NO MATTER WHAT? I DON'T MIND IF YOU HAVE TO PUT YOUR BAND FIRST.

YOU STILL HAVEN'T GIVEN UP ON THAT...

WHY WOULD I...? THIS IS FOR MY DREAM.

AND IT'S FOR THE DEAR FRIENDS WHO'VE JOINED ME ON THIS CRAZY RIDE...

TOMO .....

THAT'S WHY. THAT'S WHY I'M ASKING YOU, MICHIRU.

I HAVE DEAR FRIENDS TOO.

THEY'RE AS DEAR TO ME AS THOSE GIRLS ARE TO YOU, TOMO...

EXACTLY A YEAR AGO, I HEARD THEM JAMMING FOR FUN AND GOT SO OBSESSED THAT I FORCED MYSELF ONTO THEM...

THEY'VE BEEN TREASURED FRIENDS EVER SINCE.

NO. MY BANDMATES ARE EVEN MORE PRECIOUS.

MICHI-RU...

BUT SINCE HER DAD FOUND OUT, THEY'RE ON HIATUS...AND THEY COULD ULTIMATELY DISBAND.

WITH BOTH GUITAR AND VOCAL DUTIES, SHE'S THE STAR OF THE GROUP.

NOW WE'RE IN DANGER OF BREAKING UP, AND IT'S MY FAULT...

GU (GRIP)

SORRY, BUT I DON'T EVEN HAVE THE TINIEST BIT OF ENERGY TO SPARE FOR YOU.

STILL NOT SPEAK-ING TO YOUR DAD?

...ACTU-ALLY, I AM.

TWICE THIS WEEK, FOR A BIT.

HUNH !?

YOU'VE BEEN FREE-LOADING FOR TWO WEEKS... YOU SHOULD'VE SAID SOME-THING!

SO... HAVE YOU SORTED IT OUT?

YEAH... I'M ALLOWED TO STAY IN THE BAND UNDER CERTAIN CONDI-TIONS.

SO WHAT ARE THESE CONDITIONS? I'LL HELP HOWEVER I CAN!

AHA! AHAAA!

PIKU (PERK)

HM? YOU SAY YOU'LL DO ANYTHING ?

DID YOU MISS THE "I CAN" PART !?

A MAN-AGER? FOR AN AMATEUR BAND?

WELL, BASICALLY, MY DAD'S WORRIED ABOUT US GIRLS PLAYING IN LIVE VENUES.

...IS THAT WE NEED TO GET A MANAGER.

THERE ARE THREE CONDI-TIONS.

THE FIRST IS TO STICK TO SCHOOL.

THE SECOND IS, IF I HAVE TO REPEAT THE YEAR, I QUIT THE BAND.

AND THE THIRD ...

... LET'S GET BACK ON TOPIC.

SO YOU ADMIT YOUR PREJUDICE AGAINST ROCK?

HOW IS THAT ANY DIFFERENT FROM THE PERCEPTION OF OTAKU AS HAVING LOLITA COMPLEXES AND BEING PERVS?

DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S A REALLY CLICHÉD VIEW?

OHH. MAKES SENSE. IT'S SEX, DRUGS, AND ROCK 'N' ROLL, AFTER ALL.

SO THAT'S THE SITUATION, TOMO...

HRMM...

LIVE GIGS ARE USUALLY AT NIGHT, AND THEY SERVE ALCOHOL AT THE VENUES TOO, SO OF COURSE HE'S WORRIED.

IN A NUTSHELL!

WE NEED A WATCHDOG.

OKAY, I GET IT.

ALL RIGHT. FOR NOW, I'LL PUT OUT SOME FEELERS. I'M NOT THAT KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE MUSIC WORLD THOUGH...

NOW, NOW! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MR. MANAGER?

IF I START WITH SOME DOUJIN ACQUAINTANCES AND TRY TO GET IN WITH SINGERS AND VOCALOID CIRCLES, I MIGHT FIND SOMEONE WHO CAN BE THEIR MANAGER.

BESIDES, BY CONNECTING MICHIRU AND HER BAND TO THE DOUJIN WORLD, MAYBE IT'LL BE EASIER TO GET HER TO AGREE TO WORK ON MY GAME.

.....EXCUSE ME?

NO, NO, NO, NO, NO! WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT!?

GATAAA (CLACK)

WHAT THE HECK!? I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU, TOMO! HOW COULD WE PICK SOME GROWN MALE STRANGER TO BE OUR MANAGER!?

NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO!

YOU CAN MEET SOME PROSPECTIVE MANAGERS AND FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU LIKE OR DISLIKE! EVERYONE'S A STRANGER THE FIRST TIME YOU MEET THEM, RIGHT!?

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT KIND OF MATCHMAKING!

PLUS, WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE BIRTH, TOMO, SO YOU'RE PERFECT!

HOW IS MY BEING YOUR MANAGER GONNA MAKE YOU ANY SAFER IN THE FIRST PLACE!?

WELL, MY DAD ALREADY GAVE YOU THE OKAY AT LEAST, SEE?

WHAT!?

HE EVEN SAID, "IF TOMO-KUN GOES ALONG WITH IT, THEN I CAN REST EASY!" YOU GOT HIS SEAL OF APPROVAL!

B-BUT IF YOUR BAND GETS

FIRST THING ABOUT ROCK, THEY WON'T BE HAPPY, WILL THEY?

SO, TOMO, PLEASE...

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE I CAN COUNT ON.

MI-
MICHI-
RU...

...I'M SORRY. I CAN'T DO IT.

I HAVE MY CIRCLE... "BLESSING SOFTWARE."

AND I'M CON-VINCED I WON'T BE OF ANY USE WITH NON-OTAKU STUFF LIKE ROCK MUSIC AND BANDS.

THE COLORS OF OUR INNATE SOULS ARE TOO DIFFERENT.

TOMO ……

YOU KNOW, YOU'VE BEEN ASKING ME TO JOIN YOUR CIRCLE THIS WHOLE TIME, RIGHT?

YOU'VE BEEN ASKING A NON-OTAKU TO BECOME AN OTAKU, OKAY?

… SORRY.

MICHI-RU…

YOU DON'T NEED TO APOL-OGIZE. I SAID "NEITHER OF US," DIDN'T I?

SOR-RY.

SEEMS LIKE NEITHER OF US IS GONNA YIELD.

IS THERE REALLY NO OTHER SOLUTION?

DOES ONE OF US HAVE TO BEND …?

HOW COULD I?

SO YOU'LL JOIN US, THEN?

SO, WHAT'LL YOU DO, TOMO? DRAG ME INTO YOUR CIRCLE?

SO I'D LIKE YOU TO TAKE THE FALL, TOMO.

I WON'T LET IT HAPPEN, OKAY? I'M NOT GONNA LET US BOTH FAIL.

I REALLY DIDN'T WANNA HAVE TO RESORT TO THIS, BUT...

SU (STAND)

HUH ...?

SINCE I REALLY WANTED YOU TO BE HAPPY TO JOIN US, TOMO...

SAY WHAT !?

I WON'T DO ANY-THING...

I'LL JUST WAIT FOR YOUR CIRCLE TO CRUMBLE.

WHA —!?

PHEW ~!

...BUT I CAN'T WORK UP THE WILL TO DO ANY-THING...

EVERYONE'S WORKING INDEPEN-DENTLY ON CIRCLE STUFF TODAY, SO I GOT TO COME HOME EARLY...

MICHI-RU...

AFTER THAT, SHE PRETTY MUCH LOCKED HERSELF IN THE GUEST ROOM, AND WE HAVEN'T REALLY SEEN EACH OTHER SINCE...

I WON'T DO ANY-THING...

I'LL JUST WAIT FOR YOUR CIRCLE TO CRUMBLE.

WHA —!?

IT'S NOT LIKE RESTORING THE PC KATOU CRASHED WAS PARTICULARLY HARD WORK.

AND BETWEEN THE SCRIPT-ING AND WHATNOT... THERE'S SO MUCH THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, BUT...

IF YOU MISS YOUR WINTER DEADLINE, THEN YOU'RE THROUGH, RIGHT ...?

BUT I CAN WAIT IT OUT EVEN LONGER THAN THAT, YOU KNOW?

I WANT YOU AS OUR MANAGER RIGHT AWAY, BUT I'LL WAIT AS LONG AS I CAN.

WITHOUT SOMEONE TO WRITE YOUR MUSIC, YOUR PROJECT'LL STALL OUT, WON'T IT?

SO I WON'T DO IT, NO MATTER WHAT.

HEY, HANG ON .....

'COS THE THING IS...

...I WANT YOU JUST LIKE YOU WANT ME.

PLEASE WAIT A MINUTE.

HEY, LET'S THINK THIS THROUGH A BIT MORE.

LET'S FIND A WAY FOR BOTH OF US— NO, FOR EVERY-BODY— TO BE HAPPY.

C'MON, JOIN THE REAL WORLD-ERS!

...

SO NOW'S YOUR CHANCE! YOU CAN QUIT BEING AN OTAKU COLD TURKEY!

HUH .....?

THEY'RE ALL FORCING THEMSELVES TO GO ALONG WITH YOU.

THAT CIRCLE IS TWISTED.

BUT I THINK THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO MAKE EVERYONE HAPPY.

THAT UTAHA JOINED THE CIRCLE, AND NOW HER NEW BOOK WON'T BE COMING OUT FOR, LIKE, EVER.

BUT THAT... THAT'S —!

THE ERIRI GIRL JOINED THE CIRCLE, AND NOW SHE CAN'T APPEAR AT ANY OTHER EVENTS.

B-BUT THAT'S —!

IN WHICH CASE, YOU SHOULDN'T SELFISHLY BE TRYING TO TIE THEM DOWN, SHOULD YOU?

NGH.....!

YOU SAID IT, DIDN'T YOU?

THAT THOSE TWO ARE SUCH AWESOME CREATORS IT'S ALMOST UNREAL TO THINK THEY'D BE IN YOUR CIRCLE?

I'M WASTING ERI KASHIWAGI AND UTAKO KASUMI...

IT'S A CHAL-LENGE, TOMO.

EITHER I BECOME YOURS, OR YOU BECOME MINE...

IT'S A CONTEST TO SEE WHO KNOCKS DOWN THE OTHER FIRST, OKAY?

WHAT SHOULD I DO...?

WHAT DO I WANT TO DO ...?

...IT SHOULD BE WITH KATOU. SHE'S LIGHT-HEARTED, EASYGOING, AND CARE-FREE...

1 Childhood friend
2 Senpai
▶ 3 Friend in the same class

PIKON (BOOP)

IF I NEED TO TALK...

I CAN'T MAKE THIS DECISION MYSELF ...!

GABA (WHLMP)

GASHI

GASHI (RUB)

AUGH ~!

From: Megumi Katou
Sub: Check your e-mail

KATOU ...?

MUNI (BZZZ)

WHOA!

4"

HUH ...?

You have received a file.
You can download it below.
test.zip

A DOWN-LOAD?

THIS IS... DON'T TELL ME SHE...?

Meguri: "Well...in the end, you won't change your mind no matter what I say. No, Not just me. It doesn't matter who, right?"

KATOU.

THIS JOB MUST HAVE TAKEN A TON OF TIME AND EFFORT ...

...DON'T STEAL MY STUFF, YOU JERK.

KACHI

AHA! SO THIS IS WHY I COULDN'T FIND THE PROGRAM-MING TEXT-BOOK.

KACHI (CLICK)

HM?

Meguri: "Putting that aside, Seiji-kun, that's a real double standard there, don't you think?"

Seiji: "What is?"

Meguri: "You know what I mean. The incident involving the moment you and a cousin you grew up with became attracted to each other."

...HUH? THE TEXT IS ALL WEIRD HERE...

Meguri: "That story about how a bunch of relatives all got together in the country, and a girl got lost in the mountains, only to be found and rescued by her male cousin. That was actually a true story about you, wasn't it?"

.....

Meguri: "In other words, Seiji-kun, you and your cousin fell for each other when you were kids. You were reunited after a long time apart and unexpectedly ended up living together, reigniting the feelings you shared in the past. You admit it, don't you?"

IT REALLY HAS BOOMER-ANGED BACK AT MEEE ~!

WAAAAAAAAH!

SORRY FOR KEEPING YOU UP SO LATE, SAWA-MURA-SAN.

IT'S FINE.

I GUESS I JUST WANT TO BE NEAR YOU ALL'S CIRCLE, EVEN IF I CAN'T BE IN IT.

UMM ~!

BUT I NEVER IMAGINED THAT YOU'D COME AROUND BEGGING BECAUSE WE'RE BEHIND SCHEDULE, KATOU-SAN.

HUH?

I THINK WE SHOULD USE "MEGURI SMILE #1" FOR THAT.

YOU WERE TALKING BEFORE ABOUT THE SCENE WHERE MEGURI ENCOURAGES THE HERO WHEN HE WANTS TO GO SEE A DIFFERENT HEROINE.

MM?

HEY, SAWA-MURA-SAN.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID A BEAMING SMILE IN THIS SCENE WOULD BE WEIRD...
BUT WHY?

IT'S AN ACT .....
ANY GIRL WOULD DO THE SAME.

END

How to Raise a Boring Girlfriend

CHAPTER
20

I AM TRULY, DEEPLY SORRY!

...OKAY, OKAY. YOU CAN LIFT YOUR HEAD NOW.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY HAD A MINI SUMMIT AT ERIRI'S HOUSE.

THEY'VE GOTTEN AWFUL CLOSE BEHIND MY BACK.

AND HER COMING HERE AFTER STAYING UP ALL NIGHT... I SHOULD BE DOWN ON MY HANDS AND KNEES!

BUT IN TERMS OF STORY, THAT LAST BIT HAD NO BEARING ON THE PLOT.

CLEARLY, YOU STUCK IT IN ON YOUR OWN, RIGHT?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

THAT WAS JUST WHAT KASUMIGAOKA-SENPAI WROTE TO BEGIN WITH.

I ONLY STITCHED TOGETHER THE ART AND THE TEXT.

LIKE I SAID, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

GUESS THAT REALLY WAS KINDA FORCED, HUH?

...

THANK YOU!

PLUS...

THIS MUST HAVE TAKEN A TON OF TIME AND EFFORT ...

WELL, I WASN'T TRYING TO TRICK YOU, OKAY?

I REALLY WAS BUSY AND DIDN'T HAVE TIME FOR OUR CIRCLE WORK.

...

YOU SAID YOU HAD STUFF TO DO YESTERDAY AND WENT STRAIGHT HOME!

STILL, YOU HAD ME TOTALLY FOOLED!

I THOUGHT I COULD EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE AND MAKE A JOKE BY PULLING ON KATOU'S PONYTAIL— HER SINGLE MOE FEATURE— BUT I GUESS THAT WOULD BE SUSPECT BEHAVIOR.

I WAS GONNA BE ALL "WHY, YOU—!?" OR "OH, YOU!"

NO, JUST ...

...ERR, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I SEE. SO YOU'RE BOTH IN A FIX~!

HUH ~?

I THINK THE SAME WOULD BE TRUE IF SHE CAME OVER TO OUR SIDE THOUGH.

WELL, IN MICHIRU'S CASE, YOU COULD SAY SHE GOT WHAT WAS COMING.

YOU CAN TALK LIKE THAT 'COS YOU GUYS HAVEN'T HEARD HER MUSIC!

ALL THE SAME, YOU STILL HAVE YOUR HEART SET ON HYOUDOU-SAN, DON'T YOU?

I'M NOT PLANNING TO, BUT RIGHT NOW, I HAVE NO WAY TO DODGE MICHIRU'S SUICIDE BOMB~!

SO, WHAT WILL YOU DO?

EITHER WAY, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO QUIT ON THE GAME, ARE YOU?

WHAAA~!? YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID SO IN THE FIRST PLACE ~!

...ACTUALLY, I SECRETLY RECORDED HER PLAYING ON THIS.

WELL?

IT KINDA TAKES ME BACK.

HM ~!

RIGHT? RIGHT!? IT BRINGS A TEAR TO YOUR EYE, DOESN'T IT?

=>YAWN<=

YEAH, IT DOES ~!

...TALK ABOUT BAD TIMING ON THE YAWN THERE.

WELL, IF YOU THINK SO, AKI-KUN, THEN IT MUST BE RIGHT?

EVEN IF YOU HADN'T SAID IT, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT FROM THE VERY START!

NOW I SEE... YEAH.

THIS SONG WORKS IN THAT SCENE FROM THE FILE I SENT YOU.

WELL, EVEN IF I DECIDE ON SOMETHING, YOU CAN'T JUST ALWAYS LEAVE ME TO IT.

WHATEVER I SAY, YOU'LL IGNORE ME AND FOLLOW YOUR OWN DECISION AFTER ALL, RIGHT?

SO THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK DEEP DOWN TOO, HUH, KATOU?

TEE HEE!

ONCE YOUR SWITCH IS TURNED ON, AKI-KUN, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO STOP YOU. I DON'T HAVE IT IN ME!

AND IT'D BE A REAL PAIN.

YOU'VE... LEARNED HOW TO EXPRESS YOUR-SELF.

HM? WHAT IS IT?

...HUH?

WOW~! I'M SO GLAD...OR SOMETHING. IS THAT WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO SAY?

...FOR YOU, KATOU.

I COULD POTENTIALLY BE FEELING THE TINIEST BIT OF MOE AT THIS MOMENT...

DON'T GO CARELESSLY MAKING MORE ENEMIES.

WELL, YOU WERE SUPER-META ABOUT IT, SO I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE YOU WERE COMPLIMENTING ME AT ALL.

WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...!? ARE YOU AN IDIOT!?

NOOO! THIS IS WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BLUSH UNCONTROLLABLY!

HUUUH!? THAT'S LIKE ONE OF SAWAMURA-SAN'S INTENSE REACTIONS. I CAN'T DO THAT!

DO IT!

IF YOU SAID IT IN KIND OF A COOL WAY, I THINK THAT WOULD MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION.

ALSO, IF YOU WERE SLIGHTLY MORE CASUAL ABOUT IT...

HUUUH? REALLY?

YOU KNOW! LIKE KASUMIGAOKA-SENPAI'S HANDSOME PROTAGONIST.

FOR EXAMPLE?

BEST NOT TO CARELESSLY MAKE MORE ENEMIES, RIGHT?

UGH! NO WAY! THAT KIND OF TALK WOULD BE EMBARRASSING IN REAL LIFE.

BUT, AKI-KUN.

YOU DO SOMETIMES SAY EMBARRASSING THINGS TO THEM, DON'T YOU?

IT'S KIND OF RUDE TO COMPARE THOSE TWO TO YOU, DON'T YOU THINK?

W-WELL, THAT'S... I MEAN—

ZUI (SHOVE)

LET'S DO LUNCH! WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I RECOMMEND THE CRO-QUETTES!

BEST GET—

NOW THEN, WE'VE BEEN HERE AN AWFUL LONG TIME.

THAT IT IS...

WELL, THAT IS TRUE.

...COULD WE AT LEAST GO TO A DIFFERENT RESTAU-RANT?

I'M DRAG-GING IT OUT ... ... MOVING EVER SO SLOW ...

YES, WE SHOULD.

YEAH, GUESS SO.

I WANT TO TALK OPENLY WITH HER, SO...

THAT NIGHT

MI-CHIRU, I'LL DO IT.

I'LL BE YOUR MANAGER.

I SPOKE TO YOUR DAD TOO ...

HE SAID HE'D LEAVE YOU GUYS TO ME...

YEAH.

GABA (WHAP)

F—

FOR REAL?

...SO YOU CAN FINALLY MOVE BACK HOME ...

DON'T WORRY. I WON'T EVER BREAK MY PROMISE.

TOMO ...!

THIS IS THE DECISION I CAME TO AFTER SPENDING THE DAY WITH KATOU.

WE LISTENED TO THE SONG OVER AND OVER AND TALKED.

WE FIGURED WE'D TRY BETTING ON THE TINY HOPE WE FOUND IN THE MELODIES MICHIRU WAS STRUMMING.

O—

OKAY!

I'LL KEEP YOU ONSTAGE NONSTOP UNTIL YOU BREAK INTO THE BIG TIME, GOT IT?

AND IN EXCHANGE, IF I'M GONNA DO IT, I'M NOT GONNA GO EASY ON YOU, OKAY?

WE'LL BE A HIT FOR SURE! YOU'LL SEE!

WE'LL MAKE THE MAJORS!

WHEN IT COMES TO ROCK, YOU—NO, NEVER MIND.

FUNSU (SNORT)

LISTEN! I'LL EVEN TALK SOME OF OUR FANS AND WANNABE MEMBERS INTO GOING UP TO YOUR HOTEL ROOM!

ESPECIALLY WOMEN!

AND I SWEAR YOU'LL HAVE EVERYTHING YOU WANT, TOMO!

FIRST OF ALL, I'D LIKE TO MEET THE OTHER BAND MEMBERS.

SURE! I'LL INTRODUCE YOU! NO PROBLEM!

THEY'RE ALL PRETTY CUTE, AND THEY'RE AVAILABLE. OH! ONE OF THEM DOES HAVE A BOYFRIEND, BUT IF YOU ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO HAVE HER, I'LL MAKE HER BREAK UP WITH HIM!

STOP WITH THE CREEPY MATCH-MAKING! I'M JUST TALKING ABOUT MEETING THEM IN A NORMAL WAY!

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SO POLITE.

WE'RE GOING TO BE WORKING TOGETHER FROM NOW ON, SO WE ALL NEED TO REALLY KNOW ONE ANOTHER.

NOT IN A PHYS-ICAL WAY, OBVI-OUS-LY.

ARE YOU REALLY GONNA TAKE THIS ON THAT SERI-OUSLY ...?

MICHIRU, MY GIRL...

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN ME CUT CORNERS ON ANYTHING OTHER THAN MY SCHOOL-WORK?

GOOOO (RUMBLE)

NGH .....

OTAKU

DEMON

HEH...!

THIS GIRL REALLY HAS NO SENSE OF BOUNDARIES!

NO! YOU PRACTICE GUITAR OR SOMETHING!

THAT'S ALL I HAD TO SAY.

I'M GOING TO GO TAKE A BATH.

OH... WANT ME TO SCRUB YOUR BACK?

HUNH!?

I'M SORRY...

STOP IT.

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE.

I'M SORRY FOR MAYBE CRUSHING YOUR DREAM, TOMO!
I'M SORRY I'M SO SELF-CEN-TERED!
I'M SORRY FOR SAYING ALL THAT SELFISH STUFF!

YOU PICKED A FIGHT WITH ME KNOWING THAT MIGHT HAPPEN, DIDN'T YOU?

GACHA (KACHAK.

SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

PATAN (SHUT)

GOOD NIGHT, MICHIRU.

HA.

HA HA...

NOW I'M PAST THE POINT OF NO RETURN!

I'M GONNA TURN YOU INTO AN OTAKU WITHOUT TURNING INTO A NORMAL MYSELF.

TAKE TWO

GOOOO (RUMBLE)

BUT YOU'D BETTER BE READY.

I'M SORRY TOO. I WON'T BREAK MY PROM-ISE. THAT I SWEAR.

SAWAMURA-SAN, HURRY! HURRY!

KSHEE!

WAIT UP, KATOU-SAN... LET ME REST A LITTLE.

THE LIGHT'S GOING TO CHANGE.

HFFF!

GAYA

かll

ヤ

IT'S JUST SO CROWDED.

GAYA

かll

ヤ

GAYA (CHATTER)

かll

ヤ

BUT WE HAVEN'T EVEN WALKED FIVE MINUTES YET.

SO YOU'RE ALMOST A SHUT-IN. AS ALWAYS, YOU'RE NOTHING LIKE YOUR SCHOOL PER-SONA!

I DON'T USUAL-LY GO OUT.

AND I HARDLY DO ANY SHOPPING OUTSIDE THE INTERNET.

OH! I THOUGHT YOU CAME HERE WEEKLY LIKE AKI-KUN.

GYAH!

WHAT'S UP WITH THIS TOWN ANYWAY!?

SO MANY PEOPLE, SO MUCH NOISE, SO PACKED! I'VE HAD ENOUGH!

...THE NEXT TIME YOU UTTER THAT NAME, I'M HIRING A LAWYER!

ON-LINE, OF COURSE!

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ONLINE SHOPPER IS FROM ERIRIN.COM AND GOES BY THE HANDLE "KONOAMA."

OH, YES. I HEARD A RUMOR ON THE WIND (I.E. FROM RINRI-KUN).

KO (CLACK)

NOW WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THIS VENUE AGAIN?

UMM...

"CLUB G-MINE," IT SAYS.

THERE ARE SIX BANDS GOING ON TONIGHT, AND YOU'RE AT THE VERY TOP.

IN OTHER WORDS, WE'RE KINDA LIKE THE WARM-UP ACT.

NOT "KINDA LIKE." YOU ARE THE WARM-UP ACT.

I HAD TO BEG THE PROMOTER TO SQUEEZE YOU IN TO REPLACE A BAND THAT DROPPED OUT AT THE LAST MINUTE.

THAT'S WHAT IT TOOK TO BOOK YOUR DEBUT THIS FAST.

ANYWAY, THIS IS YOUR FIRST LIVE GIG, SO YOU'VE GOT NO NAME RECOGNITION, NO TRACK RECORD, AND NO FANS.

SO YOU'RE NOT ON THE TICKETS, THE FLYERS, OR THE WEBSITE.

YOU MEAN, NO ONE'S ACTUALLY COMING HERE TO SEE US...

I NEVER IMAGINED YOU'D MANAGE TO GET US A GIG IN ONE WEEK!

THAT'S MY COUSIN FOR YA!

EH, TOMO?

IN THE WEEK SINCE I BECAME MICHIRU'S MANAGER, I'VE BEEN WORKING LIKE CRAZY.

I HAD EVERY CONNECTION I KNOW RUNNING IN EVERY DIRECTION ...

TONIGHT'S GIG IS THE FIRST STEP.

IF I SAY I'LL DO IT, YOU BET I'M GONNA GIVE IT MY ALL.

WE'LL TAKE THE SHORTEST ROUTE TO YOUR SUCCESS.

...I NEEDED THEM TO PLAY HERE...

...BECAUSE TONIGHT...

LOST MY NERVE? WHO, ME?

YOU SEEM LIKE ANOTHER PERSON, TOMO.

YOU LOSING YOUR NERVE? THERE'S STILL TIME TO BACK OUT.

ANYWAY, NOBODY ACTUALLY KNOWS YOU GUYS ARE PLAYING.

PICK: MICCHI

AS FOR FANS... EVERYONE IN THE HOUSE WILL BE ONE BY THE END OF OUR SET.

PIN (FLICK)

AND ABOUT THAT TRACK RECORD, WE'RE GONNA BE IN DEMAND AFTER TONIGHT, SO WE'LL HAVE ONE SOON ENOUGH.

AS FOR NAME RECOGNITION, WE JUST HAVE TO CREATE THE LEGEND TONIGHT, AND THAT'LL BE THAT.

...LISTEN TO YOU AND YOUR SHAME-LESSLY BRAZEN TALK.

YOU REALLY ARE MY COUSIN.

PASHI (WHAP)

CHU

I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, TOKI.

YEP!

TIME FOR SOUND CHECK, MICCHI!

GACHA (KACHAK)

AKKI, ARE WE REALLY GOING TO BE OKAY?

PATAN (SHUT)

HA HA!

DON'T NEED TO YET! IT'S JUST SOUND CHECK.

YEAH. BREAK A LEG.

OKAY, TOMO, I'LL SEE YOU LATER!

IT'S NOT SOUND CHECK THAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT!

THEN WHAT IS IT?

YOU HEARD WHAT MICHIRU SAID.

IT'S JUST SOUND CHECK. YOU CAN RELAX, TOKI.

TOKINO HIMEKAWA
A MEMBER OF MICHIRU'S BAND

BUT NOW THAT WE'VE COME THIS FAR, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME TILL SHE FINDS OUT, RIGHT?

...DON'T REMIND ME. I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT IT.

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO TELL MICCHI THE TRUTH?

PLEASE, AKKI!!? FOR REAL!

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WE CAN COUNT ON TO DO IT, YOU KNOW?

END

THE LIVE MUSIC CLUB ..."CLUB ... G-MINE."

G-MINE

PHEW! WE'RE FINALLY HERE.

Mart

UH, HUH? WHERE'S SAWA-MURA-SAN?

PLEASE DON'T MAKE SUCH A SCARY FACE, KASUMI-GAOKA-SENPAI...

SO THIS IS THAT GIRL'S VENUE, HM...?

...WHO HERE DOESN'T ACT LIKE PART OF THE TEAM, I WONDER?

HUH? BUT WE SAID WE'D DROP BY BACK-STAGE TO SAY HI BEFORE THEY GO ON.

EXCELSIOR CAFFÉ

SHE WENT IN THERE FOR A REST.

CAN'T YOU TWO WORK A BIT MORE LIKE A TEAM?

I'M GOING TO GO LOOK IN SOME BOOK-SHOPS. WE'VE STILL GOT PLENTY OF TIME, DON'T WE?

UM, WHAT DECI-SION?

WELL, YOU MADE THE DECISION ALL ON YOUR OWN...

YOU NEVER CON-SULTED US AT ALL.

HM?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

UH, IT WAS AKI-KUN WHO DECIDED ALL THAT...

AND THAT TODAY WOULD BE THAT BAND'S LANDMARK LIVE DEBUT.

THAT RINRI-KUN WOULD BECOME HIS COUSIN'S MANAGER. THAT HE WOULD CHOOSE THE BAND OVER THE CIRCLE.

YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO GOT TO TELL RINRI-KUN TO GO AHEAD.

BUT YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW RINRI-KUN HAD MADE UP HIS MIND TO DO THOSE THINGS.

WHICH COULD ALSO BE INTERPRETED AS "I CAN BOTHER KATOU-SAN AS MUCH AS I WANT, AND SHE WON'T MIND."

OHH. WELL, AKI-KUN SAID HE DIDN'T WANT TO BOTHER YOU TWO WITH IT...

BUT YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. YOU AND SAWAMURA-SAN WOULD DROP EVERY-THING, EVEN YOUR PAID WORK, TO GIVE YOUR ALL FOR AKI-KUN, RIGHT, KASUMI-GAOKA-SENPAI?

WITH ME, I'M USELESS TO BEGIN WITH, SO IT DOESN'T MATTER IF HE LEANS ON ME.

I DON'T LIKE YOUR "WE BOTH UNDER-STAND EACH OTHER" ATTI-TUDE.

IT ANNOYS ME.

ERR...

...I'D LIKE YOU TO FORGET WHAT I JUST SAID NOW TOO.

YOU TWO SEEM TO BE GETTING ALONG LATELY, BUT IF YOU GET TOO CLOSE, YOU MAY HAVE HELL TO PAY LATER.

REST EASY. SAWA-MURA-SAN'S EVEN MORE OF A PAIN.

NOW THEN, I PROMISE I'LL BE BACK THIRTY MINUTES BEFORE DOORS OPEN, SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.

BOSO (WHISPER)

YOU CAN BE KIND OF A PAIN, HUH, KASUMIGAOKA-SENPAI?

...I'M SORRY. I'M ONLY TALKING TO MY-SELF.

PLEASE FORGET WHAT I JUST SAID.

O-OKAY ...

CHAPTER
21

THANKS VERY MUCH ~!

OKAYYY! THAT'S IT! WELL DONE ~!

.....HMM.

OKAY.

DRUMS
RANKO
RANKO MORIOKA

I THINK WE CAN PULL THIS OFF! YEP!

WE DID WAY BETTER THAN I THOUGHT WE WOULD ~!

BASS
ECHIKA
ECHIKA MIZUHARA

WE DID IT! WE DID IT! WE SURE DID IT!

THAT WAS GREAT!

GUITAR
TOKI
TOKINO HIMEKAWA

THAT WAS PERFECT!

WELL DONE, GIRLS!

DAN (WHAP)
MISHI (CRACK)
DIDN'T I TELL YOU IT WAS ONLY A REHEARSAL THOUGH?
GUITAR & VOCALS
MICCHI
MICHIRU HYOUDOU

YEAAAH!
YAYYY!
THEY WENT TO THE BRINK OF BREAKING UP 'COS OF THE FIGHT WITH MICHIRU'S DAD. OF COURSE THEY'RE OVERJOYED NOW.
THEY'RE EVEN MORE WIRED IN REHEARSAL!
GUH~! THAT HURT!

OKAY!
NEXT BAND, GET READY ~!
...I'M TRULY TERRIFIED OF HOW SHE'S GOING TO REACT TO WHAT'S NEXT.

I MEAN, SHE'S WEARING A HEAD-BAND THAT LOOKS LIKE CAT EARS!

AND HER DRESS IS ALL FLUT-TERY...

IS SHE SERIOUSLY PLANNING TO SING LOOKING LIKE THAT?

AHH ~! HMM. I WON-DER ~?

Y-YOU THINK SO?

HEY! HEY, TOMO! THE COSTUME THAT GIR- JUST CAME OUT IN IS SOMETHING ELSE, HUH—!?

IT'S NOT BAD! NOT BAD AT ALL!

RIGHT, EVERY-ONE?

I-I THINK IT LOOKS TOTALLY FINE!

T-TO EACH THEIR OWN AND ALL THAT!

ERR! E-E-EXACTLY RIGHT!

WE HAVE ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT ON OUR END ANYWAY ~!

.....

KOKU (NOD)

SO THEN... SHALL WE HAVE ONE LAST MEETING BEFORE WE TAKE THE STAGE FOR REAL?

HEY, YOU TWO. C'MON! BACK-STAGE IS THROUGH HERE.

IF WE DON'T HURRY, WE'LL MISS THEM BEFORE THEY GO ON.

URRRGH...

LEAVE ME ALONE! I SAID I'M NOT GOING, AND THAT MEANS I'M NOT GOING!

GUGUGU (GRIP)

GEEZ, SAWA-MURA-SAN! YOU'VE COME THIS FAR. THIS IS NO TIME TO BE A BABY!

...I JUST CAN'T DO IT.

THAT ASSUMPTION CRUMBLED WITH THE APPEARANCE OF A COUSIN WHO WAS BORN IN THE SAME HOSPITAL AS HIM. AND WHAT'S MORE, SAID COUSIN HAS STOLEN HIM RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER SAWAMURA-SAN'S NOSE, LEAVING HER IDENTITY FLOATING ON THE BREEZE...

UNTIL NOW, THE IDEA THAT SHE WAS RINRI-KUN'S OLDEST CHILDHOOD FRIEND HAS BEEN SAWAMURA-SAN'S ONE AND ONLY, TRULY PATHETIC CRUTCH.

DOSU (THUNK)

DOSU

DOSU

DOSU

I'M TELLING YOU, YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG! AKI-KUN S JUST ...

THERE'S NO USE TRYING TO TALK TO SAWA-MURA-SAN NOW.

UGH...

HEH-HEH-HEH! HEH-HEH-HEH-HEH-HEH!

GAH! YOU'VE ONLY KNOWN ME FOR A YEAR, BUT YOU PILE ALL THESE FALSE ACCUSATIONS ON ME, YOU YANDERE, BLACK-HAIRED VOODOO DOLL! YOU DON'T MAKE ANY SENSE!

ONCE I LEAVE, PLEASE GET CHANGED QUICK AND BE ON STANDBY ...

...SO I'VE PUT YOUR COSTUMES FOR TONIGHT'S GIG IN EACH OF YOUR LOCKERS.

OKAY. PUT THOSE HANDS TOGETHER, EVERY-ONE!

..... MM.

ARE YOU OKAY, RANKO?

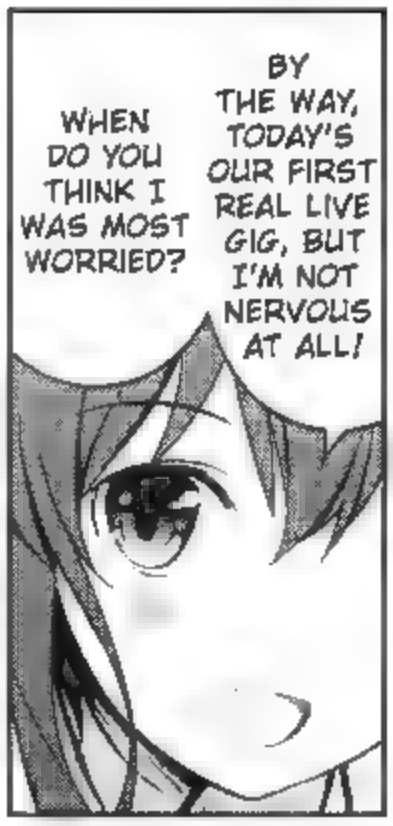
..... MICCHI.

THAT'S ALL FROM ME.

SO, FINALLY... ANY LAST THOUGHTS, RANKO?

IT WAS ...
HUH —? THEN WHEN —?

OOH! UMM, AT THE SCHOOL FESTI-VAL?
BZZT! NOPE!


WHEN DO YOU THINK I WAS MOST WORRIED?
BY THE WAY, TODAY'S OUR FIRST REAL LIVE GIG, BUT I'M NOT NERVOUS AT ALL!

YOUR MUSIC TOUCHED ME, AND I WANTED TO BE YOUR FRIEND, SO I STARTED TALKING TO YOU...

NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES WE HIT THE STAGE AFTER TONIGHT, I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER BE AS NERVOUS AS I WAS THAT DAY...

...SO THERE'S NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT TODAY FOR ME AT ALL.

TONIGHT'S PERFOR-MANCE IS JUST ONE OF MANY, MANY MORE!

...THE DAY I FIRST MET YOU ALL.

THEY'VE GOT JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF TENSION ON THEIR FACES.

SO LET'S HAVE FUN, YOU GUYS!

WE GOT THIS!

YEAH ~!

THEIR SUCCESS IS PRACTICALLY A SURE THING.

GOOD!

ALL RIGHT, I'LL STEP OUT NOW. CALL ME BACK ONCE YOU'RE CHANGED.

GACHA (KACHAK)

TOMO!

HM?

THANK YOU... THANK YOU SO MUCH ...!

URU (TEARY)

SAVE ALL THE THANKS FOR AFTER ...

IF YOU DON'T, YOU MIGHT REGRET IT.

?

PATAN (SHUT)

GACHA

.....

HUH!?

IT'LL BE OKAY. TRUST AKI-KUN.

WHAT HAS HE EVER SAID OR DONE THAT WOULD MAKE YOU WANT TO TRUST HIM?

SADLY, I WHOLLY AGREE WITH UTAHA KASUMIGAOKA ON THAT SCORE. ROFLMAO.

... COULD YOU ALSO NOT GANG UP ALL OF A SUDDEN LIKE THAT?

HOW TRULY UNSEEMLY. SHAMEFUL, REALLY. YOU'RE LIKE A SAMURAI RUNNING FROM THE FIGHT...HEH-HEH! HEH-HEH-HEH ...!

I CAN'T HEAR YOU! I CAN'T HEAR YOU AT ALL! LA-LA-LA~!

UGH, GEEZ!

COULD YOU TWO CAN THE SQUAB-BLING!?

LOOK, IT'S TIME TO GO IN.

I KNOW, RIGHT?

YEAH, WELL ...

GACHA (KACHAK)

AKI-KUN? HYOUDOU-SAN? HOW'S IT GOING ...?

I'M GONNA KILL YOU AND THEN OFF MYSELF ~!

TOMOOO!

DOOON (BAM)

GYAAAHH!! MICHIRUU! STOPP!

MI-MICCHI ...

AWW! LOOK, JUST CALM DOWN NOW, OKAY?

H— HUH?

AKI-KUN... DOES THIS SEEM RIGHT?

...NOW, LET ME ASK YOU AGAIN, KATOU-SAN.

WHAT PART OF RINRI-KUN MAKES YOU THINK WE SHOULD TRUST HIM?

...FOR REAL.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE PUBLIC COW-GIRLING?

WHAT'S MORE, COSPLAY IN THE TRUEST SENSE OF THE WORD.

P-PLEASE... PAY THIS NO MIND ~!

I MIND IT!

MEEEOW!

LET'S HEAR IT, TOMO! EXPLAIN THIS OUTFIT!

WHAT THE HELL IS TODAY'S GIG REALLY!?

ERM, WELL, YOU SEE, IT'S... HOW TO PUT IT?

UH, UMM, SO... WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

MICHIRU, TO TELL THE TRUTH... TODAY'S GIG... IT'S...

YOU'RE BETRAY-ING ME!?

..... THREE OF YOU NO LESS.

OHH~! ACTUALLY, SHE'S ANGRY 'COS, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS HER (MICCHI'S) B G MOMENT, HER BOYFRIEND (AKKI) INVITED HIS LOVERS (YOU GIRLS) ~!

EVERY MONTH HERE AT CLUB G-MINE IN AKIHA-BARA...

...THEY HAVE A CONCERT OF ANIME AND GAME SONGS.

.....
...HUNH ...?

...AND IN FACT, I ONLY REALIZED IT WHEN I MET YOUR BAND-MATES...

IT SEEMS YOU NEVER PICKED UP ON IT...

...IS AN ANIME SONG LOVERS CLUB.

...BUT YOUR BAND ...

YOU HAVE NO INTEREST IN ANIME SONGS, SO YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHERE THE MUSIC THEY WERE PLAYING CAME FROM.

ONCE I TALKED TO THE OTHERS, THE PENNY DROPPED. THEY TOLD ME THE SONGS THEY WERE PLAYING WERE OLD GAME AND ANIME SONGS FROM THE NINETIES.

WITH YOUR ARRANGE-MENTS, THEY TURNED INTO THESE AMAZING J-POP FUSIONS, SURE ENOUGH...

YOUR CLASSMATES EVEN LIKE YOUR MUSIC. NO WONDER YOUR SHOW AT THE SCHOOL FESTIVAL BECAME LEGEND-ARY!

THE REASON IT CAPTIVATED AN OTAKU LIKE ME IS 'COS THOSE CONVENTIONS AND THAT CULTURE STILL DWELLS IN THE SONGS.

YEAH. THAT'S WHERE THE NOSTALGIA I SENSED IN MICHIRU'S MUSIC CAME FROM.

RANKO!

HE'S LYING!

ISN'T HE, TOKI!?

ECHIKA!

NO WAY ...!

COULD I HAVE YOU ON STAND-BY NOW PLEASE ...?

UH, PAR-DON ME.

BAAAN (BAM)

TOKI
OTAKU WHO LOVES VOICE ACTORS. REGULAR ATTENDEE OF VOICE ACTOR LIVE EVENTS. MULTITALENTED. FLAWLESSLY EXECUTES EVERYTHING FROM GUITAR TO OTAGEI. HER DREAM IS TO BE IN NAOA MIZUOI'S BACKUP BAND... ...BUT SHE MIGHT BE A BIT LATE FOR THAT.

O-OH BOY! OH BOY! THERE YOU HAVE THE SHOCKING TRUTH, MICCHI!

DOON (WHAM)

ECHIKA
NICO ADDICT. THE RUMOR IS HER BOYFRIEND IS A VOCALOID PRODUCER. HER TRUE AMBITION IS TO SEE MICHIRU DEBUT AS A SINGER OR SOME-THING...

Y'KNOW~! WHENEVER TALK ABOUT ANIME COMES UP, YOU GET MOODY, SO WE DIDN'T WANNA SAY ANYTHING ~!

SARAAAN (SHINNG)

RANKO
STANDARD ANIME OTAKU. SHE BECAME OBSESSED WITH A CERTAIN ANIME ABOUT A BAND—HER FAVORITE CHARACTER WAS THE DRUMMER—SO SHE PICKED UP THE DRUMSTICKS. SHE'S QUICK TO MAKE DECISIONS LIKE THAT.

.....I'M SORRY.

MICHIRU... THE WORLD AROUND YOU IS A BIT MORE OTAKU THAN YOU REALIZE.

GAA (ROAR)

OH, HELL NO! THERE'S NOTHING "A BIT" ABOUT IT!

STILL, I'VE BEEN TALKING TO THESE THREE EVERY DAY WITHOUT MICHIRU KNOWING...

THEY LOVE TO TALK ABOUT OTAKU STUFF, AND THEY EVEN KNEW WHO ERI KASHIWAGI AND UTAKO KASUMI WERE. A VERY PROMISING DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE...

THAT'S WHY I ASKED THEM THEIR TRUE FEELINGS ...

...ABOUT HOW TO DEAL WITH ANIME-HATING MICHIRU, ABOUT WHAT THEIR GOALS ARE...

I SPOKE TO THE THREE OF THEM AT LENGTH UP TILL LAST NIGHT.

AND THE RESULT... HEY, HOW LONG IS SHE GONNA PIN ME LIKE THIS ANYWAY!?

...AS ALWAYS, YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR, RINRI-KUN.

IF WHAT YOU'VE DONE WRECKS THE COMMUNITY THESE GIRLS HAVE FOSTERED, THAT'LL MAKE YOU A VILLAIN BEYOND SALVATION, YOU KNOW?

EVEN SO, I HAD NO CHOICE.

I MEAN, THINK ABOUT IT. DON'T THEY SAY, "TO SHOOT DOWN THE GENERAL, FIRST, BRING DOWN HIS CASTLE"?

NO, THEY DON'T.

NO, THEY DO NOT.

THEY DON'T SAY THAT!

HUH?

SO YOU SEE, MICHI-RU...

...NOW IT'S UP TO YOU TO CHOOSE ...

YOU EITHER TAKE THE STAGE IN THAT COSTUME...

...OR YOU GET CHANGED AND LEAVE.

NGH .....!

TOMO ...

IF YOU DO, I'LL APOL-OGIZE RIGHT AWAY, SO IF YOU COULD GET OFF ME...

LIKE I TOLD YOU BEFORE, IT'S FINE TO BACK OUT.

...TOKI, ECHIKA, AND RANKO ARE ALL WAITING FOR YOU.

BUT, MICHI-RU...

I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY, MICCHI!

I'M SO SORRY I KEPT IT ALL A SECRET FROM YOU!

THIS WHOLE TIME, IT'S BEEN FUN ACTING LIKE WE WERE IN A ROCK BAND LIKE YOU WANTED, MICCHI, AND I THOUGHT MAYBE WE COULD JUST KEEP GOING LIKE THAT...

KO

KO (CLACK)

BUT IN THE END, IT'S JUST A LIE TO US ...

NO. IT'S ALL BEEN A LIE FOR YOU TOO... YOU GET THAT, DON'T YOU?

.....

MICCHI, LET'S DO THIS, OKAY?

YOU'RE STILL STUCK ON THAT ...!?
GABA (SIT)
BUT! BUT ...!
THEY'RE ALL OTAKU OUT THERE, YOU KNOW!?

IT'S NOT ABOUT WHETHER I LIKE OR HATE THEM...

THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M GETTING AT...

I JUST DON'T UNDER-STAND THEM AT ALL!

BUT YOU UNDER-STAND ME, DON'T YOU?

I SO DON'T HAVE THE CONFI-DENCE FOR THIS.

I'VE NEVER EVEN TRED TO UNDER-STAND THOSE KINDS OF PEOPLE BEFORE ...

I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANY OTHER OTAKU!

THAT'S 'COS IT'S YOU, TOMO!

ARE YOU SO HALF-HEARTED ABOUT IT THAT YOUR COSTUME BEING A LITTLE MOE TURNS YOU OFF SINGING!?

IS THAT THE BEST YOU'VE GOT!?

WOOOW!

KYAAAH!

WELL, AT LEAST MY COSPLAY WOULD BE ALIVE. YOU'D NO DOUBT BE A BAG OF CHICKEN BONES

I MEAN, CAN YOU IMAGINE YOU AND YOUR UDDERS IN COW COS-PLAY!? WHO'D WANNA SEE THAT!?

IF HE MADE ME WEAR AN EMBAR-RASSING OUTFIT LIKE THAT, IT WOULD BREAK MY HEART...

GI

GI

GI

GI (GRIT)

SO I'M SURE YOU'LL GET THROUGH TO THEM.

YOUR SONGS WILL DEFINITELY REACH OTAKU EARS!

IT'LL BE OKAY... I KNOW YOU CAN DO THIS, MICHIRU.

AFTER ALL, YOU'VE ALREADY ACCEPTED THAT ANIME AND GAME MUSIC HAS GOOD SONGS, AND YOU HAVE THAT RESPECT FOR THEM.

TOMO ... BUT ...

SO STICK WITH ME NOW...

I'LL STAY YOUR MANAGER.

AND I'M GONNA MAKE MY GAME, AND I'M GOING TO SEE ALL OF IT SUCCEED.

OH, AND TODAY'S SET LIST IS PRETTY AUDIENCE-ORIENTED, SO THERE'S NO DOUBT THEY'LL LOVE IT!

WELL~! IT WAS PRETTY TOUGH SNEAKING IN THE LATEST ANIME SONGS WITHOUT YOU REALIZING, MICCHI!

Y— YEAH?

ZWI CLOSE

MICHI-RU!

PON

ぽん

PON (PAT)

ぽん

LET'S FIND OUR HAPPINESS TOGETHER!

D'OW, OW, OW! MY HANDS! YOU'RE STEPPING ON MY HANDS!

KYAAAH!

WHOO!

ALL OF US!

OH! I MEANT ALL OF US!

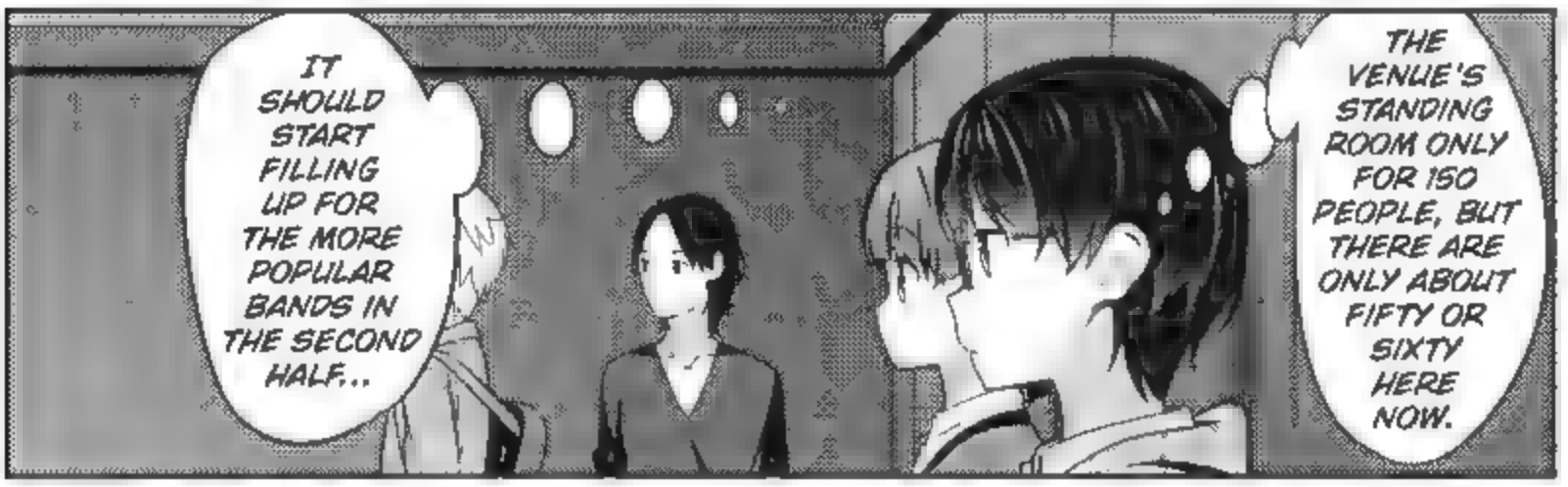
GO

GO

GO

GO (RUMBLE)

STOP THAAAT!


IT SHOULD START FILLING UP FOR THE MORE POPULAR BANDS IN THE SECOND HALF...
THE VENUE'S STANDING ROOM ONLY FOR 150 PEOPLE, BUT THERE ARE ONLY ABOUT FIFTY OR SIXTY HERE NOW.

PAAA (FLICK)

THE PLACE WON'T BE PUMPED AT THE START... CAN YOU DEAL WITH THAT...? HUH, MICHIRU?

1

KA (TAK)

SLI (SHIFF)

GL (GRIP)

2

KA

3

KA

KA

4

CHU

GADAN

YES!

THEY'RE INTO IT!

WHEN DO YOU THINK I WAS THE MOST WORRIED?

IT'S THRILLING...

MY WHOLE BODY'S... TINGLING!

THE ANSWER IS...

...IT WAS THE DAY I FIRST MET YOU ALL.

HEY! HEY! THAT SONG JUST NOW!

GARA (SLIDE)

WHAT WAS IT!?

HUH?

OH, UMM, IT'S A BIT OLD, BUT IT'S THE OPENING FROM JIRAYERS...

OOH~! I SEE! SO THAT SONG'S CALLED "JIRAYERS," HUH!?

AAH! NO, NO. THAT'S THE NAME OF THE SERIES! THE NAME OF THE SONG IS—

THE SERIES? IS THAT, LIKE, THE NAME OF THE ALBUM?

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT BEFORE!

BUT THAT SONG IS AWESOME!

H-HEY, IS HYOUDOU-SAN REALLY GOING TO JOIN US?

.....

SHE HAS NO CLUE WHATSOEVER ABOUT THE SONGS WE'RE PLAYING.

WHERE DO YOU ALL REALLY WANT TO GO?

DO YOU WANT TO KEEP HIDING THE TRUTH TO PLAY WITH HER?

WHAT ABOUT THE ISSUE WITH MICHIRU?

DO YOU WANT TO AIM TO BE AN INDIE ROCK BAND THE WAY YOU'RE HEADED?

WHY DON'T WE ALL WRITE OUR NAMES ON IT?

HEY, LOOK! I BOUGHT THIS PLAIN PICK!

.....YOU AIRHEAD!

OOPS! SORRY!

HEY, MICCHI! YOU TOOK UP TOO MUCH SPACE!

LET'S DO IT!

OH, COOL!

USE AN OIL-BASED PEN.

IN COMMEMORATION OF GETTING THE BAND TOGETHER!

LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO THE BAND!

ON GUI-TAR!
TOKI!
ON DRUMS! RANKO!
ON BASS!
ECHIKA!
AND ON GUITAR AND VOCALS!
I'M MICCHI!
17
AND WE ARE!
WAAAAAAAAH!
HYUUUU (FWIP)
ICY TAIL!
MICCHI
ECHIKA
RANKO
TOKI

NN. HNN ...?

WHAT THE—?

WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING!?

BABA (WHUMP)

GUH! GYAAH!

WAKEY, WAKEY ~!

!

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING~!? THAT'S NO WAY TO TALK TO THE PERSON WHO CARRIED YOU ALL THE WAY HOME AFTER YOU SUDDENLY PASSED OUT!

WE HAD TO TAKE A CAB AND EVERY-THING! IT WAS A BIG DEAL!

MAN, I FINALLY GET A LAP PILLOW, BUT IT DOESN'T WORK WITH CROSSED LEGS!

WELL, I COULDN'T DO IT KNEEL-ING OR SITTING SIDE-WAYS!

... WELL, WHAT-EVER.

SO I FELL ASLEEP AT THE VENUE? I'VE BEEN SLEEP-DEPRIVED THIS PAST WEEK GETTING READY FOR THE GIG...

SO, HOW WAS IT? YOUR FIRST GIG?

.....

.....IT WAS SO INTENSE.

GYU (CLUTCH)

IT WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I'D IMAGINED!

WELL, NOW YOUR DREAM'S COME TRUE.

I CAN PROB-ABLY STILL JUST MAKE IT.

IF I MISS IT, I'LL JUST GO TO A NET CAFÉ OR SOME-THING.

SEE YOU NEXT TIME...

SEE YA THEN, TOMO.

HUH? YOU'RE LEAVING? CAN YOU MAKE THE LAST TRAIN?

SO NOW... I'M GONNA HAVE YOU DO THE SAME FOR ME.

STARTING NEXT WEEK, I WANT YOU TO COME TO OUR CIRCLE MEETINGS.

I KNOW, I KNOW --!

BUT THAT'S A PAIN, ISN'T IT?

I'VE GOT THE CLOTHES YOU GAVE ME BEFORE IN THE GUEST ROOM. I'LL CHANGE INTO THEM.

YOU'RE GOING TO GO HOME DRESSED LIKE THAT?

I... CAN'T DO THAT.

WHY DON'T YOU JUST STAY THE NIGHT? I DON'T MIND.

?

TOMO, STOP TRYING TO KEEP ME HERE...

ALSO, IF YOU HAVE TO CHANGE, YOU'LL REALLY BE PUSHING IT WITH THE LAST TRAIN.

IT'S NOT LIKE TRAINING CAMP OR SOME-THING.

ALL THE OLD JUSTIFI-CATIONS WON'T FLY.

GEEZ.

YOU DO NEED TO STAY WITH ME.

GASHI (GRAB)

WAIT!

SO, I'M SORRY, BUT SEE YA.

GACHA (KACHAK)

P-PLEASE JUST LET ME GO TO SLEEP!

PLEASE! TOMO!

OHH! WOW!

KUHI

...

NGHI

.....

アニメ鑑賞会 ANIME VIEWING

I KNOW! IT'S REALLY GREAT, OKAY? BUT IT'S FOUR IN THE MORNING, YOU KNOW?

ANYWAY, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GETTING ALL WORKED UP, TOMO! YOU'VE GONE THROUGH A WHOLE BOX OF TISSUES!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT!? THIS IS THE BEST PART!

LOOK! HERE'S WHERE IT GETS REALLY INTENSE! YOU CAN'T WATCH IT WITHOUT TEARS IN YOUR EYES!

I WANNA GO HOOOME! I REALLY DO HATE OTAKU AFTER ALL!

WE'LL BE DONE BEFORE THE LAST TRAIN TOMOR-ROW!

WELL, THERE ARE FIVE SEASONS IN ALL, BUT IT'S FINE! WE'LL ONLY GO UP TO THE SECOND SEASON, *JIRAYERS NEXTON*!

HOW MUCH LONGER IS THIS GONNA TAKE!?

YOU'RE GONNA WATCH IT ALL OVER AGAIN NOW, AREN'T YOU? WHY ME TOO!?

TO BE CONTINUED

I'M SO JEALOUS! TO BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE THIS MASTER-PIECE WITH FRESH EYES! I WISH I COULD ERASE MY MEMORIES AND WATCH IT AGA N FROM SCRATCH!

BUT! BUT! I'M SO HAPPY. . I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE A FAN OF *JIRAYERS*, MICHIRU!

DAAA (DRIP)

I ONLY LIKE THE SONG! I'VE NEVER SEEN THE ANIME!

How to Raise a Boring Girlfriend

THE "MEGU-TAN (ETC.) APPEARANCE YADDA YADDA FIRST" SECTION

PART 4 NUN

TRANSLATION NOTES

PAGE 15
PSGs, or programmable sound generators, are sound chips that synthesize sounds according to user input. A relic of the 1970s and 1980s, they are most commonly associated with arcade and home video games, as well as computers.

PAGE 17
Waifu derives from the English word "wife" and is fandom slang used by (usually straight male) otaku in reference to (usually female) 2-D characters whom they view like a significant other.

PAGE 17
A **cours** is used to describe the run of a televised anime and typically refers to a three-month run of thirteen episodes.

PAGE 51
The kanji for *girigiri* used in the title of the programming textbook ***GiriGiri Novel Games*** suggests the meaning of "duty" for *giri*, but it can also be a pun, since *girigiri* also means "just barely, cutting it close." Novel games or visual novels are interactive fiction games with mostly static graphics, similar to what Aki is making.

PAGE 115
The "**konoama**" handle that Utaha throws out here means "you bitch" in typical parlance.

PAGE 121
Ex●el●ior Caffé is a reference to Excelsior Caffé, a Japanese coffee shop chain that sells Italian-style coffee and tea beverages in the same vein as Starbucks.

COMMON HONORIFICS
no honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness; if used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult.
-san: The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.
-sama: Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.
-kun: Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.
-chan (also *-tan*): An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals of either gender.
-senpai: An honorific used to address upperclassmen or more experienced coworkers.
-sensei: A respectful honorific for teachers, artists, or high-level professionals.

PAGE 6
The implication here is that a **consumer otaku**, who lives for goods and the like, would obviously not have any programming skills.

PAGE 7
Kamishibai (literally "paper play") is a form of Japanese storytelling, in which a narrator or storyteller, armed with a series of illustrated cards, weaves a tale about the images on those cards. It can be considered a precursor to Japanese manga. Similarly, Japanese dating sims often use a series of mostly still images with text to progress the plot of the game.

TRANSLATION NOTES

PAGE 129
Yandere is a character archetype who is kind but suddenly becomes violent or is violent but shows affection for the protagonist.

PAGE 140
Otagei is a term for the choreographed cheers, movements, and gestures that are employed by pop idol otaku at concerts and other events and gatherings. Within the scene, there are strict rules concerning when and where *otagei* should be performed.

PAGE 140
Na●a Mizu●i stands for Nana Mizuki, a popular Japanese voice actress and singer, who is best known for her role as Hinata Hyuuga in the anime adaptation of *Naruto*, the shounen manga classic by Masashi Kishimoto.

PAGE 140
Vocaloid is a synthesizer that outputs vocal tracks. It is wildly popular around the world, and both amateur and professional musicians have released songs with Vocaloid-synthesized singing. The term Vocaloid is also used to refer to the "vocalists" on these songs. The most famous example would be the 2-D pop idol Miku Hatsune.

PAGE 163
Jirayers is a parody of the extremely popular 1990s light novel-turned-anime fantasy series *Slayers*, written by Hajime Kanzaka. The second season of the animated series is called *Slayers Next*, which gives away the reference here.

How to Raise a Boring Girlfriend

HOW TO RAISE A BORING GIRLFRIEND ❹

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